

The Writing Development Centre:

Confidentiality and Data Protection Statement

The Writing Development Centre offers one to one tutorials with students from its office in the Robinson Library. It also offers group workshops across the university, both central generic sessions and also embedded in the Schools as part of the curriculum. We aim to provide a student-centred, non-judgemental space in which students can raise whatever issues they feel are pertinent to their studies, so that we can offer the most appropriate guidance on academic skills and help students to develop as independent, confident learners. Confidentiality is an important part of the ethos which characterises our provision.

This document describes our policy and practice when handling information about the individual students with whom we work, regarding confidentiality and data protection. This includes any personal information which enables you to be identified and may include information which is deemed sensitive under the Data Protection Act (such as that concerning a disability), or information which you yourself feel to be of a sensitive nature.

Confidentiality

The Writing Development Centre offers a confidential service for all students. Any information that a student discloses to a member of the Writing Development team in the course of a tutorial or workshop will remain confidential to the team. The team comprises the Head of the Writing Development Centre, the team of tutors, and the administrative team who support the Centre in the University Library. Issues raised by students may be discussed among members of the Writing Development team where necessary and on a 'need to know' basis.

Personal information, including your status as a student at Newcastle University, will not be shared outside the Writing Development Team with third parties without your explicit consent. Third parties might include teaching or administrative staff in the Faculties, other Services such as the Library or Student Services, parents and family, employers or other students. This is subject to the following exceptions:

- If you are believed to be at risk of harming yourself or others
- If you disclose details about your involvement in a serious criminal offence (this does NOT include academic misconduct, which is a matter of university policy only)
- If you request that we pass on information to a third party, or if you agree to a Writing Development Tutor's suggestion of contacting a third party, on your behalf. In these cases, you must sign the disclosure form to indicate that you agree to the release of specific information to an identified third party.

We will disclose information only if, in our professional judgement, exceptional circumstances apply, and in this case, information would be disclosed on a need to know basis to relevant individuals. If

the need ever arises for confidentiality to be broken, every attempt will be made to discuss this with you beforehand, unless to do so may worsen the situation for you.

There may be times when either we or you feel it would be necessary or helpful for a Writing Development Centre team member to contact a third party on your behalf, such as your Personal Tutor, Module Leader, member of the Student Services teams in King's Gate, Student Union Advice Service or parent, to support you effectively or ensure you receive appropriate and accurate guidance. In this case, we will discuss the benefits of this disclosure with you, and seek your permission. You may withhold your consent, in which case we will not initiate discussion with a third party in a way which allows you to be identified. If you do give consent by signing the disclosure form, we will agree with you the nature of the information to be disclosed and the third parties to whom it will be disclosed.

It should be noted that, by law, consent is still required from under 18s in the same way as for adults with regard to matters of data protection and confidentiality. However, in accordance with statutory requirements, where child protection issues are involved, it is not possible to offer confidentiality to a person under 18 as any disclosures must be reported.

Data Protection

We record some of the information you provide us with, for administrative purposes such as booking appointments, case notes to ensure continuity of guidance between tutorials, and for monitoring reporting service use statistics to the university. All information concerning students is held and processed by Newcastle University strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Both paper and computer records are the property of the University and responsibility for them is devolved to the Writing Development Centre. The University's obligation to maintain confidentiality and data protection, and your right to decide who should have access to this information, are clarified in this document and will also be explained to you in tutorials and any data-gathering tool such as an online booking form.

Writing Development Centre Tutors will keep records of tutorials on our electronic database in accordance with their professional judgement. Information may include personal details, key points or issues raised, relevant background information, guidance offered and any actions to be taken. This is used to process bookings, inform future tutorials with our tutors to ensure continuity, and for monitoring and quality purposes. Electronic records are kept securely on the University computer system, and may only be accessed by the Writing Development Team and any Library or University staff who may be involved in maintaining the database. Any paper records such as correspondence with third parties or disclosure forms will be kept securely locked in the Writing Development Centre. Information from our database is also used for statistical purposes, to aid monitoring, planning and reporting and will be anonymised so that individuals cannot be identified.

Under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, you may seek access to records about you, using a Subject Access Request. Further information about these arrangements at the University are available at www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/ There is a presumption in favour of disclosure unless the preparation of the material will be unduly burdensome to the University or there is a need to contact third parties for consent.

The period for which records are retained before destruction is informed by current data protection legislation and good practice within the higher education sector. Records (both paper and electronic) are kept for the duration of the student's studies plus 2 years.