

STUDENT SUPPORT AND PASTORAL CARE

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Scope and Purpose	This document outlines the student support and pastoral care policy and procedures, applying to all students at Belfast Bible College.
Who uses the process	Monitoring staff and students within the college
Process review	This process should be reviewed following the end of each academic year
Date last reviewed	July 2021
Date next review	August 2022

At the heart of the purpose of Belfast Bible College is the desire to be a welcoming community. We welcome people of all ages and backgrounds, of all nationalities and Christian denominations, of all abilities and levels of spiritual maturity as they come together to learn. One of our objectives is ‘to support every student to reach their individual potential’. Part of the way we do this is by making available to you both academic and pastoral support.

The college offers the possibility of three levels of pastoral support and care to its students:

Level 1 Pastoral Support

Details of academic support are available elsewhere; this document focuses solely on the pastoral support available at College. The support we offer as a College is secondary to your own primary support sources of family, friends and church (your home church and/or adopted church if you are an international student). You will find support here at BBC through our community life events and through just being an active member of a caring community. Indeed, most students’ needs are addressed by a combination of these sources of support, both internal and external to the College.

But we all have times when we face particular pressures as a result of workload, times our physical, mental and social health and wellbeing or challenged. At those times, you might feel you need additional support. If so, there are a number of options at and through the College, offering you different levels of support.

Level 2 Formal Pastoral Care:

Pastoral Care at the college is co-ordinated by the Pastoral Care Coordinator (see useful information). We hope this Guide is self-explanatory, but should you have any queries or questions please do speak to the current Pastoral Care Coordinator.

It is the policy of Belfast Bible College that every student will understand and experience the following:

- The College is a Christian community characterised by mutual care and support. The College recognises its duty of care to every student within the parameters of its particular context.
- All students are entitled to participate fully in our community and to be valued and respected.
- At times of particular need, students will have the opportunity to be listened to and to receive prayerful support on an individual basis.
- Such support will be provided within the parameters of the College Pastoral Care Procedures and the Student Support and Pastoral Care Policy.

There are a number of ways of accessing formal Pastoral Care:

i. Self-referral by the student

A student can refer him/herself for Pastoral Care at any time by making direct contact with the pastoral care coordinator.

ii. Referral (with the student's consent) by a member of staff

In this case, at the student's request and having obtained his/her express consent to do so, the member of staff will inform the Pastoral Care Coordinator that the student wishes to avail of formal Pastoral Care.

iii. Academic Support



In this case, a personal tutor, advisor of studies or the academic office may become aware of circumstances affecting a student, and can advise the student that pastoral care is available, and in some cases they may inform pastoral care who under the discretion of the PCC initiate contact with the student.

iv. Placement Support

In the case of placements where a student is on placement the pastoral care needs and wellbeing of the student as to the nature of their placement will be considered by the Placement Coordinator and Pastoral Care Coordinator. Suitable pathways of support will be agreed for the student in question to support the student wellbeing during and post placement, these will be documented in conjunction with the Placement Coordinator.

Who cannot refer

The PCT does not accept referrals by students although if a student has a serious concern for the welfare of another student, they may mention this to the Pastoral Care Coordinator (see final paragraph under Level 1 above).

If a student accesses the Pastoral Care service, they will meet for an initial conversation. If the student then wishes to embark on a period of formal pastoral care, they will have the following explained:

- a. the College's Formal Pastoral Care Policy, including the Confidentiality Policy;
- b. the student to sign the 'Statement of Confidentiality in Pastoral Care' form;
- c. the support options available throughout college community as detailed above.

After a few sessions, a review meeting will be arranged. The importance of this review is that it facilitates both parties in assessing the value and progress of the work they are doing.

At any time during this period, the Pastoral Care Coordinator may ask the student if they would like to consider accessing external support – or they may ask for this themselves - and information about a range of potential sources will be provided (see below).



Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a key priority in the context of student support at BBC and is part of our duty of care to every student. In light of this, the Pastoral Care Coordinator adheres to the following principles and practice:

- i. Whatever a student tells a member of the PCC will be treated with utmost care.
- ii. For the protection of the student and the PCC, the general substance of a pastoral relationship may be discussed within the confines of the PCC's supervision but **no** reference will be made to any individual student.
- iii. Confidentiality is a core aspect of our duty of care but it is not absolute. While every effort will be made to gain a student's consent to do so, personal information will be disclosed – ideally in the student's presence – in the following circumstances:
 - a. if there is reason to consider that the student is at serious risk of harm or injury to him/herself or others; or
 - b. if it is required by law.

If a member of staff becomes aware of any of the above, they will be obliged to notify the Pastoral Care Coordinator, or if not available, to the Principal who will discuss with the PCC at the earliest opportunity.

In the event that any of these reasons make it necessary for the PCC to share the student's information, every effort will be made to encourage the student to disclose the information on his/her own behalf and/or to be present at and participate in the conversation with the appropriate external agency.

If the student is not present, he/she will be kept informed of the process. The PCC will also inform the Principal of the College.

Students should be assured that asking for Pastoral Care at the College DOES NOT in any way effect how you are perceived as a student – there is absolutely NO stigma attached to having the wisdom and courage to ask for support.

Record-keeping

As is usually the case in formal Pastoral Care provision, the PCC will make brief notes at the close of a pastoral meeting. These notes will be:

- i. Limited to factual information.
- ii. Un-named and coded.

Notes will be kept securely on SharePoint and will be destroyed up to one year after the student leaves the college, except for cases where it is deemed necessary to keep them for longer, e.g. in the case of abuse.

Reporting

As a matter of good practice, the PCC will inform the Principal of the names of students who are receiving support. Should the PCC be absent for any reason, it is important that someone else on staff has that information, in case an emergency arises. Similarly, the Advisor of Studies may ask for these names, within the context of gaining a broader understanding of students who may also be accessing academic support. In both of these cases, it will be only the names of students which are provided.

Boundaries of Support

Any Pastoral Care the College can offer is necessarily limited; it is available during College semesters and within normal working hours and it will conclude on the completion of studies at the College.

BBC is a College and not a church. It is important therefore that any support and care we give is understood as only part of what might be needed. We fully recognise the place of pastoral care support provided by our students' churches and their leaders.

Level 3 Counselling

Sometimes a student needs more than Pastoral Care – they need to access some form of counselling.

How we differentiate between BBC Pastoral Care and External Counselling

Pastoral Care will be characterised by the following:

- Its aim will often be to provide support to a student through the time of a crisis, for example a bereavement or other significant difficulty.
- At its outset, there will be no contract (written or otherwise) delineating a set period of meetings or indeed a set period of time for each meeting. However, the general expectation of the PCC will be that the number of meetings per student will be 2 or 3, rather than 6 or more.
- Prayer support will be offered during pastoral care sessions.

Counselling, which will be outsourced, will be different in these important ways:

- While the need for counselling may have been highlighted by a time of crisis, it will give the opportunity for the student to work on areas of their lives which need growth and change.
- There will normally be a written contract delineating a set period of meetings and a set period of time for each meeting – for example, 6 meetings of 45 minutes each – with a review at the end, when both counsellor and counsellee can decide whether to continue or terminate the arrangement.
- The counsellor will normally have a supervisor to whom he/she is accountable to report.

If the PCC suggests that a student could benefit from counselling, they will offer options where such help can be accessed, including the services provided by Christian Guidelines. BBC has a partnership with CG, whereby CG is willing to send some of its counsellors on to our campus at previously agreed times and days to provide counselling appointments to students who wish to avail of this opportunity. Once the PCC has put the student in touch with CG, the student is responsible to contact CG to arrange to complete an application form and to make his/her own appointment. From that juncture, the College is no longer involved in the process and the relationship remains a confidential one between CG and the student.

Do not suffer in silence

We hope that this document has given you an overview of the kinds of Pastoral Support which you can access both at and through BBC. The bottom line is that we do not want you ever to feel you have to suffer alone. If you feel that you are in need of some extra support, please share that need with us and we will do our utmost to find you the form of support which we believe to be most appropriate for you.



Useful contact information 2021/22

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