



CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOOL OF  
VISUAL &  
PERFORMING  
ARTS

## Missing Student Policy & Procedure

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Key Staff	Principal, Rector, Heads of House, Deputy Head of Welfare
Lead Staff for Review	Principal/Rector

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## Aim

CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. As such, it is the policy of CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA to actively investigate any report of a missing student or students who take leave without permission who are enrolled at the Colleges as either a full or part time student.

This policy is consistent with the legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of students as described in section 175 of the Education Act 2002, Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2016.

## Purpose

Since many of our students are from an international background it is imperative that we provide a caring and safe environment. As part of providing this environment it is very important that we can account for all our students whilst they are in our care and as such we have a duty of care to our students.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for all staff including volunteers who work for CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA about the policy and procedures applicable to missing students or students who take leave without permission.

It should be remembered that international students can be isolated and vulnerable, with their friends and family living thousands of miles away. They may have an imperfect command of English, and be unfamiliar with British customs. As such, requests from the families of international students should be dealt with particularly sympathetically; as persons may not appreciate the provisions of the Data Protection Act, or the College's position on confidentiality.

## Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Principal. The College has a legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its students, staff and visitors and aims to provide a safe, healthy and high quality environment. All staff & students have a legal responsibility to take reasonable care for their own safety and for that of others. All members of staff including volunteers but specifically Boarding staff, the Welfare Team, Programme Directors at CATS and Course Leaders at CSVPA should be aware of the policy, procedures, and sanctions dealing with incidences of missing students or students who take leave without permission.

## Thresholds

There are three thresholds which allow for different procedures to be adopted in the case of missing students and students who are absent without leave. The three thresholds are Under 16's, Under 18's and Over 18's. In most cases, fortunately staff will be dealing with students who are absent without proper authorisation and rare is the case where a student is missing. In order to ascertain which policy should be followed when a student is missing or missing without permission the senior person coordinating should determine the age of the student and adopt the procedure which is relevant.

## OVER 18'S

**For the purposes of this policy an over 18 student is defined as missing when they have been absent from residence and college for more than 48 hours without proper authorisation or notification and where all other avenues of information gathering have been exhausted.**

These students are adults, and have the right to be treated as such. Students have the right to privacy, and there is no automatic or necessary requirement to reveal their whereabouts to parents, guardians, next of kin and members of staff or fellow students. Indeed, to do so (without the permission of the student concerned) would be a breach of the Data Protection Act (1988).

It is important to remember that some students do not wish to have contact with their immediate family for personal reasons; as adults, this position must be respected. It is a serious matter to disclose personal details of a student to a third party, even if it is a student's next of kin. This should be done by Student Services in discussion with the Principal of the College/Rector or Vice Principal/Provost. It is important to remember that any person who decides to breach confidentiality must be able to justify their action in terms of the prevention of serious harm, or a genuine and reasonable belief that serious harm to the student might be prevented by such disclosure.

The Data and Attendance Manager (D&AM) will monitor the daily null attendance reports and associated returns from the House Day Supervisors. If the D&AM finds that a student has had unauthorised null attendance for two consecutive days, the D&AM will raise a Shackleton Student Welfare note and also notify the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL), Deputy DSL, the Vice Principal/Provost and the Principal/Rector by e-mail.

## UNDER 18'S

**For the purposes of this policy an under 18 student is defined as missing where they fail to return back to the Boarding House at curfew time.**

## UNDER 16'S

**For the purposes of this policy an under 16 student is missing when they do not appear at their required times of registration or curfew times.**

## All students: General Procedure upon Discovery That a Student Is Missing

The safety of the student is paramount. The absence of a student from the College for a prolonged period, or an extremely anxious enquiry from a friend of relative, may give rise to concerns about the student's safety.

These concerns may be particularly acute if it is known that the student is suffering from a health problem. Therefore, it is essential that the member of staff dealing with the enquiry checks with all relevant sources of information to ensure that they have a full picture of the circumstances before escalating to senior management or third parties, such as the police. Since the control of information is vital, a designated person should be identified as stipulated above to control, regulate and funnel information to the relevant individuals bearing in mind the statutory obligations outlined above.

Confirm that the student is missing. The different thresholds are laid out above.

Information gathering can be done by carrying out the following:

- Obtain a photograph (from Shackleton) and familiarise yourself as to what the student looks like
- Ask other staff on duty in the Boarding House, if they know any reason for absence
- Obtain the student or friend's number and make direct contact if possible
- If appropriate ask friends to try to make contact using phone or social media as available
- Ask other students if they are aware of any reason for the absence - though their information should only be taken as a guide to be followed up, and certainly not as the only evidence. Obtain mobile phone numbers to make direct contact if possible
- Begin a search of the Boarding House in other rooms, as it may be that the student is with a friend and has not told anyone
- Visit private residence if student is in independent accommodation
- Ask duty staff in other areas, to check their areas and ask their students for any information (i.e. for them to do what you have done within the House)
- Check other areas of the school, e.g. Reading room, Common room IT room, etc.
- **If none of this produces any information and all avenues of information have been reasonably exhausted then the on-call Designated Senior Leader should then make a decision to enquire/inform the parents or guardians of the missing student and/or inform the police. The on-call Designated Senior Leader will determine who is to make contact.**
- Maintain all notes, records, and recordings of telephone conversations.
- If/when the student returns Boarding Staff must telephone Senior Staff, at most appropriate time, e.g. if student returns at 3am inform Senior Staff at 9am the following morning. The police should be informed as soon as the student returns.
- When the student returns an interview should be completed using the student statement form documenting where the student has been, who they have been staying with, reasons for being absent, etc.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Acquiring information through Shackleton to determine last time seen in residence, personal contact details, authorised absences, check exeat system etc.
- The student file, (to determine whether confidential information has been stored on file) and other relevant information, e.g. Health issues, etc.
- Speak to the Vice Principal, Head of House, House Parents, Programme Director, Maintenance Staff, etc.

## Follow-on procedures

Since the weight for responsibility bears heavily for students who go missing and is labour intensive, (usually incidences occur at unsocial hours) and can involve a number of members of staff it is imperative that incidences of students missing without proper authorisation are kept to a strict minimum. As a result, and as part of our discipline procedure, CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA reserves the right to recover unnecessary costs to either students or their parents. As such, House Parents are required to outline the procedures for exeat and the consequences of being absent without leave during the students' induction.

In practice, CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA recognises that its boarding students will need time to understand and familiarise themselves with the rules of its accommodation. Therefore, CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA will not, as a rule, impose financial sanctions on students during the first

four weeks of them joining, for their first offence. However, if students are repeatedly going missing, then not only will they face CATS College Cambridge/CSVPA formal disciplinary procedures but may also be faced with financial costs.

When collating information, members of staff will need to be aware of a number of issues before making a decision on consequences to be applied. Below is a list of things that they might consider.

- Is the student despondent or mentally or physically disabled?
- Is the student experiencing academic, personal, or financial problems?
- Has the student disappeared before?
- Does the student have a known drug and/or alcohol problem?
- Has the student received any threats or warnings?
- What was the student's lifestyle? Does the student have a criminal record?
- Did the student or perpetrator leave a note?
- Have similar incidents been reported within the area (attempted abductions, suspicious persons)?
- Obtain information about mobile phone numbers registered to or used by the student.
- Continue to verify when, where, and by whom the missing student was last seen.
- Interview individuals who may have had contact with the student prior to the disappearance.
- Secure the student's bedroom as a potential source of information and evidence. Instigate a room search if required. See the Search and Confiscation policy for procedure.
- Advise family members about support services.
- Assign a liaison to ensure that family members are provided with information and support.

## Review

These procedures will be reviewed annually and may also be reviewed in the light of new legislation or incident that may occur related to this policy. This policy has been developed and implemented in consultation with the whole college community including students, parents/carers, staff, and partner agencies.

Evaluation will take place every year with the policy review.