

Guidance for Friends

This guidance provides information for those who are acting as a Friend to a student who is participating in certain University processes. These processes could include:

- Appeals procedures
- Academic Integrity Meetings
- Student Conduct Meetings
- College Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees
- University Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees
- Meetings held under the Code of Practice on Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study
- The informal route of the Harassment and Bullying Policy

Who can be a Friend?

A Friend is defined in the University Regulations as:

- a member of staff of the University, or
- a registered student of the University of Birmingham, or
- a Guild Advisor at the Guild of Students, or
- a Sabbatical Officer of the Guild of Students.

However, a Friend cannot be someone who may be a witness to an alleged incident or who has some other involvement in the proceedings (for instance, a committee member or person who has another role within the meeting).

What is the role of a Friend?

The role of the Friend is to support the student participating in the University processes outlined above.

As a Friend you cannot answer questions on behalf of the student. The role of a Friend is to support the student but not to act as a representative or to put forward a case on their behalf.

Before a meeting

When attending a meeting, you should take your University ID with you so that it can be confirmed that you are eligible to act as a Friend.

If, as a Guild advisor or officer, you do not have University ID, you should ensure that the Guild confirms your identity with the meeting secretary (or in the absence of a secretary, the Chair) in advance of the meeting.

If you realise before the meeting that you cannot act as a Friend, you will need to tell the student you are supporting as soon as possible so that they can find another Friend to accompany them.

The University would not normally postpone a meeting due to the unavailability of a Friend.

During the meeting

The process for each meeting will normally be explained to you at the start of the meeting.

You can take written notes on behalf of the student you are supporting, if you wish to do so, although for many of the processes outlined above, the student will be provided with notes or a report of the meeting shortly afterwards.

The proceedings are conducted in English and if you wish to speak with the student during the meeting, this should be in English. A Friend cannot translate questions or answers during the meeting. If the student is unsure about a question, they can ask a member of staff to repeat or rephrase the question.

During some proceedings you will normally be allowed to make statements and ask questions (via the Chair) on behalf of the student you are accompanying.

If making statements or asking questions is not expressly permitted within the appropriate Code of Practice or Guidance notes, the chair/staff member may allow you to make statements and ask questions (via the Chair) on behalf of the student you are accompanying.

All participants in a meeting are expected to behave reasonably, civilly and with courteousness throughout.