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Residential Statement of Principles and Practice		ACC004	1
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RESIDENTIAL STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Policy Statement

Activate Learning is a pioneering education group with a global reach, committed to transforming lives through our approach to learning. Activate Learning believes everyone is capable of improving their lives through learning, with emotional support, motivation, purpose and the right application in accordance with our Learning Philosophy.

Purpose

This document sets out our residential principles and practice in accordance with the National Minimum Care Standards for the Accommodation of Residential Students Under the Age of 18 in Further Education Colleges and is subject to Inspection by OFSTED. The standards are not applicable as such to the welfare of students aged 18 or over but may affect provision for those over 18 sharing the same accommodation or facilities as students under 18.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all staff who provide or support accommodation provision at Merrist Wood and Harcourt Hill. It is made available to all residential students, parents and staff.

Responsibilities

The Head of Accommodation Services is responsible for the implementation of these principles and reports to the Director of Group Facilities Operations. The Chief Operating Officer is the Group Executive Team strategic lead for accommodation. Group Directors of Campus & Faculty provide the operational link to Faculty and Student Support and work closely with the Accommodation Teams.

Commitment Statement

Our priority is to safeguard and promote the welfare of our students for whom accommodation is provided. With our Learners, we will co-create a highly memorable learner experience, with impactful, high-quality learning and feedback, empowering learners' progress. We will provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment for our residential students. Working together, residential and academic staff will support students' growing independence and the development of personal, social and life skills to help them prepare for responsible adulthood and to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work, and to society in general.

Provision

We are able to provide residential accommodation to a limited number of learners at Merrist Wood College and at Harcourt Hill, Oxford to enable them to access courses that would be otherwise difficult given their home location.

Merrist Wood campus has 98 single study bedrooms with shared facilities. Students under 18 also have use of a small kitchenette and lounge area within their block. Some over 18 blocks have a full kitchen and are able to self-cater. Rooms are arranged in single-sex blocks for students under 18 and mixed for students who have turned 18 before the start of the academic year. Meal packages are available and social spaces are provided. Further information is outlined in the Accommodation Handbook.

We lease some accommodation blocks at Harcourt Hill Campus based at Oxford Brookes University. All rooms are single study bedrooms with ensuite facilities for students studying on our Activate Learning

Rugby programme. The blocks are divided into flats comprising 3 – 7 single bedrooms and each flat has a kitchen and lounge area. Flats are organised by single sex. Meal packages are available and social spaces are provided. Further information is outlined in the Accommodation Handbook.

All accommodation meets the National Care Standards Commission for Further Education residential provision.

Staff

Head of Accommodation Services operates a team at both Merrist Wood and Harcourt Hill. At each site, the Accommodation Manager has responsibility for both the operational aspects of managing the accommodation but also ensuring the right support is in place for the students' overall welfare. The Accommodation Manager is on site generally Monday – Friday 8.15am - 5.15pm. They are supported by an Accommodation Officer/Administrator who will provide cover when students are in residence. In addition, Wardens support students outside of these hours on a rota system. There is a designated primary Warden who is on call overnight. The Wardens are accommodated in individual studios/flats on campus when on duty. Students are not permitted access to Warden accommodation at any time.

Admission

Activate Learning offers accommodation to prospective students in accordance with its Procedure for Admissions for Residential Students. Students must be at least 16 years old and capable of independent living as set out in the Fitness to Study and Reside Procedure.

Once a student is offered a place on their L2 or above course at Merrist Wood, they are able to apply for residential accommodation. Priority is given to students who are under the age of 18 and who are not able to travel to college daily which applies to those outside a radius of 15 miles, but exceptions may apply. Separate accommodation may be made available to over 18s. Other students undertaking a short full-time course or on block apprenticeships or higher education may be offered rooms if they are available.

Accommodation at Harcourt Hill is only for students enrolled on Activate Rugby Academy programmes alongside their academic courses.

Prospective students are offered advice and guidance regarding living in halls of residence throughout the enrolment process. Students under 18 and their parents/guardians are invited to an informal interview with the Accommodation Team. For students over 18, there is no requirement for parents/guardians to attend but they will be welcomed if they wish to do so. At Merrist Wood this is normally in person and will include a tour of the campus. For Harcourt Hill, interviews have been conducted via Teams for September 2024 but will be in person where possible going forward. The interview will cover the student's individual needs including dietary, religious, cultural, physical and mental health, medical, hobbies, interests, criminal convictions, welfare and support needs. On the basis of this interview, providing the student's needs can be met, a residential place will be offered. Where a student has specific needs, a full risk assessment is carried out to determine any reasonable adjustments that are necessary before the student is able to move in.

Allocation

At Merrist Wood College, students under the age of 18 years of age are accommodated in same-sex halls of residence on the main campus. These blocks are separate from the over 18 accommodation and from our university students who also reside on the campus. Students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and/or Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) are most likely to be accommodated closest to the Wardens' studios so that they can seek help and support readily. Rooms will be allocated so that new students are grouped together. Allocations will also take into account the course being attended. Where an individual turns 18 during the course of the year, where space allows, they will be given an option to move into mixed accommodation. The Accommodation Manager will consider any requests to change rooms if space allows.

At Harcourt Hall, students under the age of 18 years of age are accommodated in rooms that form same-sex flats within the halls of residence. These blocks are Block J, K, L and D in Westminster Hall. These buildings are located together and the Activate Learning Accommodation Office is in Block K. Year 2 students may also be accommodated in Scott House. Rooms are allocated in conjunction with the Rugby

programme staff to support team cohesion and any requests to change rooms will be addressed collectively.

As far as possible, transgender or gender-questioning students should be able to sleep in accommodation appropriate to their gender identity. We will consult with the student, their parents, or carers (for those under 18), and any relevant professionals (where appropriate) to assess suitability on a case-by-case basis. For instance, it may be considered appropriate for those who have medically transitioned to use accommodation that matches their gender identity, while those who are gender questioning or wish to socially transition, may be advised to use accommodation corresponding to their biological sex. This is in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Induction

Students moving into halls of residence are provided with additional support during Connect to College week to help them transition to living away from home. This will be co-ordinated by the residential staff under the umbrella Connect to Residential and covers the essential safety elements of residential living as well as available support and expectations around behaviour. Further information can be found in the Student Handbook that is provided in digital form before the student moves into halls of residence.

Safeguarding

The care and safeguarding of students is of paramount importance. All residential staff are subject to safer recruitment checks as set out in the Recruitment Policy. At Merrist Wood, cleaning staff are also DBS checked and where maintenance contractors need to access rooms, a chaperone is provided and students are asked to vacate the room whilst work is being undertaken. At Harcourt Hill, cleaners are only allowed into communal spaces when there is a member of staff present in the building. Students are notified that cleaning is in progress and they are required to vacate the flat. Where maintenance contractors need to access rooms, a chaperone is provided and students are asked to vacate the room whilst work is being undertaken.

Residential staff work closely and collaboratively alongside Safeguarding, Wellbeing, Student Experience and Academic staff to develop the safeguarding culture within the halls of residence. Residential staff take a trauma informed approach and build positive relationships so they know and understand the students as individuals.

Safeguarding concerns are referred to the Safeguarding Teams based at Merrist Wood or City of Oxford College as appropriate, as per the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and Safeguarding – Reporting a Concern Procedure. Harcourt Hill staff meet with the City of Oxford College Safeguarding team on a regular basis.

Welfare and Support

Residential staff are supportive and observant and log concerns via Promonitor to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to an individual student's wellbeing. Weekly meetings take place between Accommodation and Academic staff to ensure that there is a broad understanding of the student's wellbeing and academic progress as well as highlighting any behavioural issues or wider concerns. Accommodation staff will be invited to participate in safeguarding meetings, retention panels, disciplinary meetings etc where appropriate to provide a complete approach to the learner's welfare.

Whilst Wardens are expected to be the primary point of contact for residential students, information regarding access to College welfare services and external helplines are readily available in the halls of residence. Students also have access to an independent listener and may contact their parents/guardians via a free and private telephone service if they cannot do so using their personal mobile. Parents/guardians are also provided with details should they need to contact the residential staff at any time. An ongoing dialogue between College and home is encouraged.

Activate Learning promotes healthy lifestyle choices and Progress Coaches deliver a comprehensive personal development curriculum that encompasses aspects of personal safety, wellbeing, physical and mental health.

Students are expected to be registered with a Doctor at their home address and if they are unwell, to return

home for treatment and advice. The Accommodation Team and/or Wardens can provide contact details if medical care is needed before a student can return home.

Controlled medication must be held in the Accommodation Office and dispensed under the supervision of a member of staff who has completed the necessary Administration of Medication training. Students may hold prescribed or over the counter medication for personal use only. Students must notify the Accommodation staff or Wardens if they require medication or their medication regime changes.

Supervision and Monitoring

Whilst residential staff are always available, it is recognised that young people require certain freedoms and privacy. If a student is not accounted for the Accommodation Team will initially contact Faculty to determine whether the individual has reported for lessons. The Accommodation Team and/or Warden will initiate the Students Who Go Missing Throughout the College Day Procedure.

Students are able to leave campus providing they sign out and hand in their keys to the Accommodation Team (office hours) or the duty Warden during the evening. Students are required to be registered back within the halls of residence by 11pm. If a student is suspected or reported as missing from halls of residence at this time, the Warden will initiate the Students Who Go Missing Procedure.

Students have free access to wi-fi. At Merrist Wood this is subject to monitoring and filtering in accordance with the IT Services Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure. At Harcourt Hill, we are trying to establish the basis upon which students can access wi-fi safely.

Conduct

Students in residential accommodation are expected to follow the code set out in Student Conduct and Behaviour in Accommodation. This is based on the principles of social and personal responsibility and respect for community living. It is designed to keep students, many of whom will be living away from home for the first time, safe. This procedure is referenced in the Accommodation Licence to Occupy and Residential Handbook which are shared and agreed with students and parents.

The Head of Accommodation Services has a responsibility to manage behaviour within the residential setting and communicate any worries or concerns to the Faculty or Student Services where appropriate. The Positive Behaviour Management Framework is used to support and guide students through open communication. The Head of Accommodation Services will liaise with the regional Head of Student Experience and Faculty staff to address any issues of growing concern and disciplinary matters.

Whilst residents' privacy is respected, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a student may have a prohibited or banned item on their persons, in their possession, in their student accommodation or locker, the Student Search Policy and Procedure will be initiated. The search will be conducted by a trained and authorised member of Accommodation staff with another member of staff to witness. For students under 18, parents/guardians will be contacted.

Supporting Individual Needs

Where a student has individual needs, the Accommodation Team will maintain an effective, supportive and open dialogue with them, their parents/guardians, Faculty and Student Support Services to ensure the support they require is extended to their living in halls of residence. The Head of Accommodation Services should be made aware of any EHCP for residential students. Where a student may need support in the event of an emergency, the Head of Accommodation Services must provide a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

Recreation

A designated social spaces is provided within Woody's at Merrist Wood. This is a lounge with darts, pool, other games and a tuck shop. At Harcourt Hill, the same arrangement is in development but is subject to space being made available by Oxford Brookes. A range of evening enrichment activities are organised through the Warden teams and students are actively encouraged to participate.

Student Voice

Activate Learning takes account of the student voice through regular surveys and meetings with students. For residential students, an additional Learner Voice feedback session for residential students is held termly. The Student Enrichment Officer also visits both campuses to gain feedback. The Accommodation Team use this information to enhance the experience of those accommodated on campus and improve service levels. They will liaise with other members of College staff including catering staff and facilities to represent the views of the students. "You said, we did" feedback is provided where appropriate. On a less formal basis, wardens will meet with students on a group basis regularly to gather feedback and wider contributions to College life. They will also conduct individual progress reviews 3 times a year to ensure that care standards are being maintained.

All feedback is welcomed, whether positive or negative, in order for the College to continually improve its mission to transform lives through learning. Students may lodge their Compliments, Comments and Complaints using a QR code that is on display in the halls of residence.

Safety and Security

Activate Learning ensures that the accommodation is of a high standard and complies with health and safety requirements. The Head of Accommodation Services is to ensure that risk assessments are carried out annually and a programme of regular spot checks is undertaken. At Merrist Wood, all necessary health, safety and compliance checks are managed and undertaken through P&E and the H&S Team and any actions identified are completed in a timely manner. Repairs and maintenance issues are reported through the Facilities Help Desk. At Harcourt Hill, Oxford Brookes is responsible for all necessary health and safety checks and maintenance. The Activate Learning H&S Team in conjunction with the Accommodation Manager should ensure that these are being undertaken, retain copies of appropriate documentation and confirm that remedial action is being taken. The Accommodation Team is responsible for reporting faults to the Halls Manager.

Accommodation Managers should undertake regular checks of the halls of residence to ensure all fire safety measures are in place. Drills are carried out once a term at Merrist Wood and annually at Harcourt Hill.

At Merrist Wood, Accommodation staff will follow the College's usual Emergency Procedures with regard to lockdown, bomb threats etc, which are set out on the College's SharePoint site. At Harcourt Hill, the principles of the College's Emergency Procedures are valid but Accommodation staff will be directed by Oxford Brookes as to the appropriate actions to be taken.

All halls of residence are protected by access control to prevent non-residents entering the building. CCTV is available to cover each entrance hall and screech alarms are installed in Merrist Wood on emergency exits. At Merrist Wood, the Accommodation Team is able to access CCTV in accordance with the usual protocols. At Harcourt Hill, a subject access request needs to be made to release CCTV footage.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Activate Learning are committed to advancing equality of opportunity, respecting and celebrating difference, eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and fostering good relations between all who work or learn at, or use the services of Activate Learning.

Activate Learning aim to create and maintain a working and learning environment in which all people have the opportunity to participate fully, give of their best and achieve their full potential in a climate free from discrimination or harassment.

Activate Learning recognise that all have a right to equality of opportunity irrespective of race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, or socio-economic status, background, or class. For instance, Activate Learning aims to support gender diverse students and give support and understanding to those individuals who wish to take, or have taken steps, to present themselves in a gender different assigned to them at birth. Equality and diversity is central to all that we do, and fundamental to our mission and values.

However, the Equality Act 2010 does permit certain exceptions from the prohibition on discrimination against trans people in relation to communal accommodation. The exception allows communal accommodation to be restricted to one sex only for privacy reasons, as long as the accommodation is managed as fairly as possible for both males and females.

References

The following documents can be found on the policy and procedure app [here](#).

- Accommodation Licence to Occupy
- Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Fitness to Study and Reside Procedure
- IT Services Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure
- Learners Who Go Missing Throughout the College Day Procedure
- Procedure for Admissions for Residential Students
- Recruitment Policy
- Residential Accommodation Policy
- Residential Handbook
- Safeguarding – Reporting a Concern Procedure
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Student Conduct and Behaviour in Accommodation.
- Whistleblowing Policy