<Creative Academy>

<Student Advocate Statement>

Overview

A **student advocacy statement** is a formal or written declaration that clearly explains a student's or group's needs, rights, or proposed institutional changes.

A student advocacy statement outlines a specific purpose, core values, and actionable targets designed to protect student rights, improve institutional policies, and foster an inclusive educational environment.

Creative Academy Student Advocacy Statement

Applies to: All students of Creative Academy, including students on programmes validated or delivered in partnership with the University of West London (UWL)

This Advocacy Statement is part of the Creative Academy policy framework published on the Creative Academy Policies & Procedures page.

It must be read and applied with all of the following policies:

- Mission Statement and student agreements: the Mission Statement, the Student Charter (Creative Academy), the Student Learning Agreement, Terms & Conditions, and the UWL Student Partnership Terms and Conditions for 2024–25, 2025–26 and 2026–27.

- Complaints, appeals, behaviour and fitness to study: the Complaints & Appeals Procedures, the Audition Appeals Procedure, the Fit to Study Policy, the Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and the Student Absence Policy (with its Student Absence Form).

- Safeguarding and student support: the Safeguarding Statement, the Cause for Concern Policy, Cause for Concern: Student in Distress, the Lockdown Policy & Procedures, the Disability Mental Health Support Policy, the Student Support Strategy, the Wellbeing Strategy and the Wellbeing Referral Process.
- Families and student voice: the Parental Engagement Policy, which governs how families are involved, and the Student Representatives Policy, which governs student representatives acting as advocates.

- Equality and access: the SBC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Statement, the I.D.E.A. Policy, the Access and Participation Policy and the Entry Requirements Policy.

- Communication and information: the Student Communications Policy, the Media Consent Policy (and Form), the Social Media Policy, the Public Information Policy, the Artificial Intelligence Policy and the VLE Statement.

- Finance and student protection: the Student Protection Plan, the Refund & Compensation Policy, the Crisis & Emergency Loan Policy, Bursaries, Value for Money and the Consumer Protection Law Self-Assessment.

- Quality and learning: The Golden Thread: Quality, Governance & Enhancement, the Internal Verification Policy, the Peer Observation Policy Form and the Work Based Learning Statement.

- Staff conduct: Slough Borough Council Dignity at Work, which sets the standards for staff acting as advocates, and the Slough Borough Council Employers' Liability Insurance.

1. Purpose

Creative Academy wants every student to be heard fairly, safely and with confidence in any formal process that affects their studies, wellbeing or progression. This statement explains who may act as a student's advocate, who may not, and why.

It covers academic misconduct meetings, disciplinary hearings, fitness to study and fitness to practice panels, complaints, appeals, safeguarding-related meetings, and support or reasonable-adjustment reviews ("formal processes").

2. What an Advocate Is

An advocate is a person who, with the student's consent, helps the student to:

- understand the process, the evidence and their options;
- prepare a written or verbal statement;
- attend meetings with them and, where the panel allows, speak with and on behalf of the student;
- make sure the student's views, wishes and rights are properly put across.

An advocate does not replace the student. The student remains the main participant, and the panel will always give the student the chance to speak for themselves.

3. National and University Standards

This statement follows recognised national good practice and the policies of our awarding partner, including:

- **The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) Good Practice Framework**, which expects providers to let students be accompanied, to keep processes fair, open and proportionate, and to make sure accompanying persons are suitable and do not create conflicts of interest.
- **The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education**, which expects fair, transparent and accessible processes for complaints, appeals and student support.
- **The Equality Act 2010**, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students and to avoid discrimination in how processes are run.
- **National independent advocacy standards** (such as the Advocacy Charter and the Quality Performance Mark used across the UK advocacy sector), which stress independence, confidentiality, being led by the person, and having no conflict of interest.
- **Safeguarding law and guidance**, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (for any student under 18) and the Care Act 2014 principles for adults at risk.
- **UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018**, which control how personal and sensitive information is shared with advocates.

UWL's Own Policy

Creative Academy's approach is in line with the University of West London's position, which says students may be supported by:

- **A UWL Students' Union (UWLSU) Advice Team Caseworker:** This is the main and highly recommended option. UWLSU Advice provides free, confidential and independent advocacy. Their trained advisers can help students prepare for and represent their views at academic offence meetings, disciplinary hearings, fitness to practise panels or appeal reviews.

- **A Current Registered Student:** Students have the right to be accompanied to a panel or appeal by a "friend", as long as that person is currently registered as a student at UWL.
- **An Independent Mental Health Advocate (Advent Advocacy):** Where a student is dealing with complex personal or mental health difficulties outside university that are affecting their studies, UWL works in partnership with Advent Advocacy, which provides independent advocacy to make sure the student's voice is properly heard during university processes.

UWL also sets these limits:

- **Family Members:** Family members can support a student privately, but they are generally not allowed to act as the student's formal advocate or spokesperson in internal university hearings.
- **Legal Representation:** Practising solicitors or barristers are strictly not allowed to represent or accompany students at internal panels unless the University Secretary has given exceptional written permission in advance.

Where a matter is formally handled under UWL regulations, UWL's procedures take priority, and Creative Academy students keep full access to the UWL options listed above.

4. Who May Act as an Advocate at Creative Academy

A student may choose **one** advocate from the following:

4.1 A Current Creative Academy Student Representative

A student who is currently enrolled and holds an elected or appointed student representative role at Creative Academy. They must:

- be currently enrolled and in good standing;
- have no involvement in the incident, issue or need being considered (for example, not a witness, complainant, or person named in the case);
- agree to keep all information confidential.

4.2 A Creative Academy Staff Member Who Is Unconnected to the Matter

A member of staff who:

- has had no involvement in the incident, issue or need, including any investigation, decision, referral, assessment or teaching directly linked to it;
- is not sitting on, advising, or reporting to the panel hearing the case;
- has no personal relationship with the student or any other person involved that could create, or look like, a conflict of interest.

The staff member acts for the student in this role and must not share information with colleagues except as allowed by this statement or required by law or safeguarding duties.

4.3 An Independent Advocate (Local Youth Worker)

If a student wants an advocate who is fully independent of Creative Academy, they may ask for one. **Creative Academy will appoint a qualified local youth worker** to act with and on behalf of the student. The youth worker will:

- be independent of Creative Academy's management, teaching and decision-making;
- hold an up-to-date Enhanced DBS check and have safeguarding training;
- follow recognised professional youth work and advocacy standards;
- be led by the student's wishes, while still following safeguarding duties;
- be provided **free of charge** to the student.

Creative Academy will try to appoint the independent advocate within **5 working days** of the request and, where needed, will reasonably adjust meeting dates so the student is not disadvantaged.

5. Who May Not Act as an Advocate

5.1 Family Members

Family members may not act as a student's advocate, representative or spokesperson in any Creative Academy formal process. This includes parents, carers, guardians, partners, spouses, siblings, grandparents and other relatives, and close family friends acting on the family's behalf.

This rule exists to:

- protect the student's independence and right to speak for themselves;
- protect the student's confidentiality, as some matters may involve information the student does not wish their family to know;
- avoid emotional involvement or conflicts of interest affecting a fair outcome;
- stay consistent with UWL and wider higher education practice.

Family members are welcome and encouraged to support students privately, for example by helping them think through their situation, offering emotional support before and after meetings, and helping them get in touch with the advocacy options above.

5.2 Legal Representatives

Practicing solicitors, barristers or other legal representatives may not represent or accompany students in internal Creative Academy processes, unless the Principal (or, for UWL processes, the University Secretary) gives exceptional permission in writing in advance. This does not affect a student's right to get legal advice privately at any time, or their rights to external review.

5.3 Others with a Conflict of Interest

No one may act as an advocate if they are a witness, complainant, investigator or decision-maker in the case, or if their involvement would otherwise make the process unfair.

6. Exceptions: Safeguarding, Under-18s and Reasonable Adjustments

To make sure this statement is lawful and fair, the following apply:

- **Students under 18:** Where a student is under 18, Creative Academy may need to contact a parent or person with parental responsibility, in line with safeguarding law. A parent or carer may be told about or invited to a meeting **in a supporting role only**.

They may not act as the advocate. The student will still have their own advocate under Section 4.

- **Reasonable adjustments (Equality Act 2010):** Where a disabled student needs a specific unrelated person to be present (for example a carer, paid support worker, interpreter or BSL interpreter), Creative Academy will make that adjustment. That person attends to **provide support or access only**, **not to advocate.** Requests should be made to the Student Services Manager before the meeting, and they will not be unreasonably refused.
- **Safeguarding concerns:** If an advocate becomes aware of a risk of harm to the student or others, they must follow Creative Academy's Safeguarding Policy. Confidentiality cannot be promised where there is a safeguarding risk.

7. Process for Arranging an Advocate

1. When a formal process starts, the student will be given a copy of this statement and told about their right to an advocate.
2. The student tells Student Services/Empower who their chosen advocate is, ideally **at least 3 working days** before the meeting.
3. The student signs a **consent form** allowing relevant information to be shared with their advocate.
4. Creative Academy checks the advocate is eligible and has no conflict of interest.
5. If the advocate cannot attend, the student may ask for the meeting to be postponed once for a reasonable time.

8. Conduct, Confidentiality and Data Protection

Advocates must:

- treat the student, staff and panel members with respect;
- keep all case information confidential and use it only for the case;
- not record meetings without the agreement of everyone present;
- return or securely delete case papers when the process ends.

Creative Academy will handle all personal data under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, sharing only what is necessary and only with the student's consent, unless the law requires otherwise. If an advocate's behaviour seriously disrupts the process, the chair may pause the meeting and the student will be offered a fair chance to choose another advocate.

9. Equality and Non-Discrimination

Choosing, or not choosing, an advocate will never disadvantage a student. Creative Academy will apply this statement fairly to all students, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

10. Right to Review and External Complaint

Students who are unhappy with how this statement has been applied may raise this through the Creative Academy Complaints Procedure, and then through Slough Borough Council.

Once internal procedures are finished, eligible students may refer their complaint to the https://www.lgo.org.uk

11. Summary

Can act as an advocate	Cannot act as an advocate
Current Creative Academy Student Representative (with no link to the matter)	Family members (parents, carers, partners, siblings, relatives)
Creative Academy staff member with no link to the incident, issue or need	Solicitors or barristers (unless exceptional written permission is given)
Independent local youth worker appointed by Creative Academy, free of charge	Anyone involved in the case, such as witnesses or decision-makers

Family members are valued supporters, privately, outside formal processes.

This statement should be read with Creative Academy's Safeguarding, Complaints, Appeals, Disciplinary, Equality & Diversity, and Data Protection policies, and with the relevant UWL regulations.

Overview

Reviewing this statement or policy

This policy or statement will be annually reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose, up to date and effective. Student representation will be part of the process to ensure that it is fair and clear.
Any changes will be uploaded to the website, ensuring that it is accessible to prospective and current students. For general enquiries and/or complaints regarding this statement, please contact the Creative Academy using the information below:

- By phone - 01753 875400
- By email - info@creativeacademy.org
- By post - Creative Academy, 73a Stoke Poges Lane, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 3NY
- By website - using the contact us page on www.creativeacademy.ac.uk
- For complaints - please see the complaints process on the website