

# Counselling, Wellbeing department

## How we work



THE COUNSELLING TEAM IS PART OF THE WIDER UNIVERSITY WELLBEING DEPARTMENT

### YOUR COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Following your initial counselling session (which we will usually arrange within 2 – 3 days) there may be a short wait until you can be booked in to return to see your counsellor for a further session(s). Due to high demand for counselling at peak times, we periodically operate a minimal waiting list.

It is important to advise us as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment. This gives us the opportunity to offer it to a student who may be waiting.

Counselling take place on the Egham campus, Founder's Building East, for face-to-face sessions. Students can choose to have online sessions if preferred. Our reception is located at Founder's East 140 and is open each day in term time.

### HOW WE WORK

All our counselling is conducted in accordance with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions<sup>[1]</sup>. We place a great importance on making sure that anything learned through your counselling is kept strictly confidential to the Counselling team subject to the conditions below<sup>[2]</sup>.

The team keeps general statistics<sup>[3]</sup> to help us prepare reports for the University or for Freedom of Information requests.

We normally only communicate with other College services such as the GP Surgery or Academic Schools, about individual students, when we have that student's agreement.

The main exception<sup>[4]</sup> to this rule is in cases where concerns have been raised about a student's safety and wellbeing. We will consider these concerns and reserve the right to make such minimum disclosures as might be appropriate to ensure the students' wellbeing is safeguarded. Where elevated concern for a student has been expressed, that student may be confidentially discussed within a meeting with the wider Wellbeing senior team, particularly where a student has accessed additional mental health support and guidance from those teams. We will always try and involve the student in this process when possible.

If a member of staff, for example a Wellbeing Adviser, refers a student for counselling we initially confirm to them whether or not that student attends so they can update their engagement records.

Our counsellors are carefully recruited and are competent<sup>[5]</sup> to help you.

We are always happy to receive feedback from students and should you have any complaints formal & informal processes exist for these to be resolved<sup>[6]</sup>.

### EXPLANATORY FOOTNOTES

[1] The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions governs all aspects of the Counselling Relationship. [BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions](#). In the main it deals with ensuring that:

- the counsellor has respect for the client's right to live their life as they choose.
- the counsellor makes sure they are competent to help the client and safeguard them.
- the counsellor takes care to ensure the counselling remains confidential.
- the counsellor never acts in a way which exploits the client's vulnerabilities.

[2] The Counselling team consists of the counsellors, the administrative co-ordinators, and our outside supervisors. Counsellors discuss their work with each other so may well know the background to a particular



student's problems. The administrative co-ordinators will know some details of the cases as they may receive referrals, write emails and deal with case administration. All counsellors must have a supervisor with whom they discuss their work. This is done anonymously whenever possible. From time-to-time counsellors will attend courses where they may present anonymised case material as part of the training. Counsellors keep notes on cases which are confidential to the team. Notes are kept for five years and are then confidentially destroyed. These notes are kept in conformity with GDPR regulations. Client names are coded on these notes to maintain confidentiality. You are entitled to see your notes to check their accuracy; however, the team does not release notes for use outside of the counselling work or to furnish evidence for legal proceedings.

[3] General statistics are kept about numbers attending the service from each academic school and each year. We note how often certain issues occur and keep a total of critical incidents of which we learn, (e.g., serious assaults, suicide attempts etc.). Other information e.g., ethnicity can help us identify areas of the student population that we may not be reaching. The statistics are handled with care and used judiciously to prevent anyone being identified from them.

[4] The most usual cause for disclosure is when a student appears to be at risk from suicide or when an individual appears to have lost the ability to act rationally in taking care of themselves. Less common reasons might be when counsellors learn about the possibility of planned individual violence; intended acts of terrorism; ongoing sexual abuse of a child or any other clear possibility of serious harm to anyone. Counsellors *do not* need to break confidentiality if they learn that a crime has been committed or is planned - e.g., over drug use - and will not normally do so. A counsellor can be compelled to give evidence in court or produce case notes in certain situations, although this is rare, and we will decline involvement where possible.

[5] Most of the counselling work is done by permanently employed, fully trained counsellors who are answerable to internal or external supervisors. Some counselling work is done by fully trained volunteer counsellors who are supervised by the permanent team. A small number of sessions are offered by counsellors in training. These counsellors have been carefully selected and are in ongoing training. Their clients are assessed first by trained counsellors and their work is very closely supervised.

[6] If you are not happy with the counselling you are receiving, please discuss this with your counsellor or, if this is too difficult, the Head of Counselling & Mental Health or another member of the counselling team. If you wish to be advised on how to register a formal complaint, please ask the Head of Counselling & Mental Health or the Head of Wellbeing. You can share feedback via the [Accessing Wellbeing Support page](#) on the Student Intranet

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