Document Q4.4

COUNSELLING SERVICE POLICY

Approved by Academic Board – February 2016

Last Review: March 2020

Next Review: November 2020
Counselling Service Policy

1 The University of Law’s Counselling Service Policy has been informed by the Quality Assurance Agency’s Quality Code for Higher Education, specifically the Advice and Guidance for Enabling Student Achievement. The QAA’s Quality Code is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education institutions and sets out how academic standards are established and maintained and how the quality of learning opportunities are assured and enhanced. This policy sits within The University of Law’s Quality and Standards Code which provides a suite of policies designed to safeguard the academic standards of The University of Law and to assure the quality of learning opportunities offered; this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant policies within the code.

Introduction

2 The University of Law (the University) recognises that central to this policy is the University’s responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name and the quality of learning opportunities for students. This policy sets out the scope of the University's Counselling Service policy, including the provision of a Counselling Service, and the procedural approach to counselling adopted by the Counselling Service.

Responsibility for this policy

3 Ultimate responsibility for the development of clear and effective processes and procedures associated with the maintenance of standards and quality assurance of academic provision and overseeing their application lies with the Academic Board.

Expectation

4 The University has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Key aims and principles
The University provides an effective and inclusive Counselling Service, to ensure that students may fulfil their academic, personal and professional potential and have a full and active role in University life.

Procedural approach

The Counselling Service’s approach is defined by its aim and objectives, confidentiality and privacy code, and code of ethics.

Counselling Service aim and objectives

The aim of the Counselling Service is to deliver professional, confidential and short-term counselling. The Service is dedicated to working at all times in the best interests of current students, fostering their learning, development, psychological health and wellbeing so they may fulfil their potential and have a full and active role in University life.

The Counselling Service objectives are to:

8.1 provide a high quality professional counselling service in compliance with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)’s Ethical Framework to students who experience educational, social, emotional or psychological issues which inhibit academic and working performance and personal development;

8.2 assist students with the transitions into and out of education, to support student retention and the achievement of the student’s personal, academic and professional potential;

8.3 have an at risk policy to identify and support vulnerable students who approach the Counselling Service;

8.4 promote the mental wellbeing of students by sharing expertise and understanding of emotional issues that affect learning and development;

8.5 provide a consultation service to staff dealing with students;

8.6 be a specialist area within the University;

8.7 continually review and evaluate practice and pursue new initiatives which address the changing needs of the University, maximising staff expertise and taking into account other services available within the wider institution.
Confidentiality and Privacy code

9 The Counselling Service works within a strict code of confidentiality which means that all information about the client in the context of counselling remains confidential within the Service. What the client discusses in the sessions is not passed on to anyone outside of the Service without the client’s permission.

10 However, in some rare situations, counsellors may need to break confidentiality without the permission of the client; for example, when the client or someone else is at risk of harm or there is diminished ability to act rationally. Other reasons for breaking confidentiality include if a counsellor learns about the possibility of planned violence, acts of terrorism or on-going child sexual abuse. Counsellors endeavour to seek the client’s permission to break confidentiality or talk to the client directly about passing on the information themselves. However if this is not possible, counsellors may pass on information to appropriate third parties.

11 The Counselling Service adheres to the BACP’s Ethical Framework which states that all counsellors have an ethical obligation to discuss their clinical material with their external clinical supervisors. In these cases, client identities are not revealed. Copies of this framework are available upon request.

12 It is essential for the Counselling Service to keep written records of all clients’ details and sessions to ensure the Service is accountable and to assist counsellors in their work. When client information is kept on computer, it has restricted user access and is password protected. Written or typed notes are kept in a locked cabinet and cannot be accessed by anyone outside of the Counselling Service.

13 Clients have the right to see the notes kept about them within seven years. To access these notes, clients must make a written request to the Senior Counsellor explaining the reasons for the request. The Counselling Service will respond to the request as soon as possible but it should be noted that under the law, it may take up to one month to respond. Once received and approved, the Counselling Service puts together the file for the client to view in the presence of a counsellor. If notes contain references to other people, this information is removed as protection is granted to third parties.

Counselling Service Limitations

14 The Counselling Service is not able to offer formal risk or psychiatric assessment, open-ended counselling and has no facilities for in-patient admission. The Service cannot provide medication monitoring, prescription service or psychiatric support including home visits and other interventions best dealt with by a GP, the NHS, private psychiatric support and/or emergency services.
Complaints

15 If a client feels unhappy about the way the Counselling Service has managed issues regarding confidentiality or counselling, they can talk to their counsellor in the first instance. If this is not possible or if having discussed the matter with their counsellor, the client is still unhappy, they can discuss their concerns with the Senior Counsellor.

Responsibility for the provision

16 Responsibility for the implementation of the provision lies with the University’s Operations Function.

Monitoring and evaluation of the provision

17 Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Counselling Service policy lies initially with the University’s Operations Function. Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of this provision lies with the Academic Board.

Date for next review:

November 2018

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