

University of Hertfordshire Counselling Service Agreement

The Counselling Service is part of the Student Wellbeing team and are committed to supporting you whilst you are at university. Counselling offers the opportunity to work through any emotional or psychological problems that may be affecting your wellbeing, relationships, or studies. There is no expectation that you arrive knowing exactly what you want to talk about.

What to expect

- Appointments last **50 minutes**
- Your first appointment is an opportunity for you and your counsellor to:
 - understand your concerns
 - discuss what you would like help with
 - consider whether counselling is the most appropriate support
 - agree together what would be most helpful next.

Counselling at the University is primarily **brief and goal-focused**. It is not long-term or open-ended. **Brief counselling** aims to help you make meaningful progress within a limited number of appointments. If your counsellor believes longer-term help would better meet your needs, they will discuss appropriate options with you.

Your counselling pathway

Everyone begins with an initial counselling appointment.

Following this appointment, you and your counsellor will agree the most appropriate support based on your needs. Depending on what would be most helpful, this may include:

- a focused counselling appointment with follow-up
- up to six counselling sessions
- follow-up appointments to review progress
- a combination of these approaches.

The pathway initially offered following your referral is based on the information available at that time. Following your first appointment, your counsellor may recommend a different approach based on your assessment and your shared understanding of what would be most helpful. There is **no automatic entitlement** to a specific number of sessions. Decisions about ongoing support are made collaboratively, taking account of your needs, therapeutic progress and the equitable use of the counselling service.

Talking about difficult things

One of the distinctive features of counselling is that **anything** can be brought into the room. This includes:

- difficulties in your life
- your thoughts, feelings or behaviours
- concerns about your studies or relationships
- worries about the counselling process
- **how you feel about your counsellor or your counselling sessions.**

If something doesn't feel right, you feel misunderstood, disappointed or uncomfortable, we encourage you to talk about it. Exploring these experiences together is often an important part of counselling and can help strengthen the work you do together with your counsellor.

Your support with Student Wellbeing

Student Wellbeing offers different types of support.

- **Brief Counselling** provides therapeutic support to help you understand and work through emotional or psychological difficulties.
- **Mental Health Advisers (MHAs)** provide practical support for managing the impact of mental health on your studies, including reasonable adjustments, support planning and liaison with academic schools.

Generally, students tend to work with one service at a time, but this is dependent on need. If somebody you know is already receiving support from a counsellor or Mental Health Advisor in the service, please let your counsellor or advisor know so that we can consider any potential conflicts of interest.

Cancellations and missed sessions

- If you cannot attend a session, please give 48 hours' notice by emailing studentwellbeing@herts.ac.uk or phone on 01707 284453.
- Further to the first session, once you have started seeing your counsellor, any missed appointments or appointments cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice will still count towards your overall number of sessions and we will try our best to offer you another appointment but there may be a wait.
- If you miss two appointments in a row, then you will not be offered another appointment and will have to self-refer again for counselling in the next academic year.

Late arrival

- If you know that you are going to be late for the beginning of your session, please email Student Wellbeing or phone on 01707 284453. Your counsellor will wait for your arrival, and you will be seen for the remainder of your session. However, if you arrive 20 minutes late, you may not be seen and will have to rebook.

Confidentiality

- This is a confidential service. However, to provide you with the right support we may consult with colleagues in the Dean of Students office on a need-to-know basis.
- If there is significant harm to yourself or others, your counsellor may need to break confidentiality. You will be informed of this before this occurs if possible.
- Your counsellor keeps confidential clinical notes in accordance with university policies and data protection legislation.

Ending counselling

Counselling ends when:

- when your agreed contract has ended
- another service or resources would better meet your needs

Ending counselling is something that you and your counsellor will discuss together wherever possible.