



Counselling Service Policy

1 Context

- 1.1 The primary task of the college is the education of its students. Implicit in this statement is the understanding that students work more effectively in a supportive environment which encourages personal development and autonomy. Students who are in control of their personal lives are more likely to achieve educationally and contribute to the overall success of the college.
- 1.2 Counselling aims to help students, through individual or group work, to feel they are in control of their own lives, able to make choices and decisions, and put them in to action. Counselling offers the opportunity for the student to talk and be heard in a safe, non-judgemental environment. The counsellor's role in this process is to facilitate the student's personal development in ways which respect her/his values and capacity for self determination. The counsellor will not give advice but will help the student find her/his own answers.

2 Entitlement

- 2.1 The Counselling Service is available to all students of Bedford College.
- 2.2 Students are entitled to expect a high quality therapeutic Counselling Service which:
 - is client-focused
 - is delivered by appropriately qualified counsellors
 - abides by the Ethical Framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Bedford College Equality and Diversity Policy
- 2.3 The Service is not open to students on counselling courses who are seeking a specific number of hours of personal therapy for assessment purposes only. However, students on those courses who are in need of counselling support are entitled to the same level of service as all other students.

3 Professional practice

- 3.1 All counsellors will be trained to diploma level and be committed to maintaining their competence through on-going professional

development.

3.2 Counsellors will have regular supervision with a BACP accredited supervisor of up to one and a half hours per month.

3.3 Counsellors will not misrepresent their training or experience.

4 Confidentiality

4.1 The BACP Ethical Framework requires that counsellors offer the highest possible levels of confidentiality in order to respect the client's privacy and create the trust necessary for counselling.

4.2 Counselling sessions are confidential to the student. Unless they have the student's prior consent, the counsellor will not pass on to a third party any information regarding a student's attendance or presenting issues.

4.3 In exceptional circumstances, the counsellor may take the decision to break confidentiality, with or without the student's consent if necessary where, in her/his professional judgement:

- there is a risk of the student harming themselves or being harmed
- there is a risk of another person being harmed
- there is a risk of a serious crime being committed.

In such circumstances the counsellor will always seek to obtain the student's consent prior to disclosure.

4.4 It is therefore ethically and legally unwise to promise 'total' or 'absolute' confidentiality. Rather does the Counselling Service offer confidentiality within the law and the BACP Ethical Framework.

4.5 All counselling records and case notes will be kept securely in locked drawers. Students' contact details will be held separately from case-notes.

4.6 The policy on confidentiality and the purpose of record-keeping will be explained to all students using the Counselling Service. The student's consent to collect and record information will be obtained, in accordance with data protection legislation.

4.7 Records will be kept no longer than is strictly necessary, up to a maximum of 3 years from the commencement of counselling. Records will be disposed of safely.

5 Service delivery

5.1 The Counselling Service offers the following interventions:

- one-to-one therapeutic counselling by appointment
 - consultations with teaching staff to support them in their tutorial role
 - work in a preventative way through group workshops and tutorials
- 5.2 Counselling will be provided in an appropriate, safe and confidential environment.
- 5.3 Wherever possible students should arrange their counselling appointment outside class times. If attendance during class time is unavoidable, they must seek permission from their tutor.
- 5.4 Counselling sessions will last for up to 50 minutes and students will normally attend on a weekly basis.
- 5.5 Appointments may be booked directly with the counsellor or via the Student Services help desk.
- 5.6 The counsellor will develop and maintain an effective network of internal and external referral agencies and refer students as appropriate.
- 5.7 The counsellor will develop and maintain a bank of resources on counselling-related issues for use by Student Services staff and by students on a self-help basis.

6 Marketing strategy

- 6.1 The Counselling Service will be publicised to students and staff via:
- induction talks
 - Student Services publicity materials
 - posters
 - staff and student intranets
 - tutorial programmes
- 6.2 The counsellor will attend staff meetings within teaching Centres and contribute to the staff development programme for personal tutors.

7 Supporting policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Bedford College Equality and Diversity Policy
BACP Ethical Framework
Confidentiality Policy
Child Protection Policy

8 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Counselling Service is evaluated annually as part of the college's self assessment process and in line with the Ofsted/ALI Common Inspection Framework. Statistical data on levels of activity is collated monthly.

Data is also provided through student satisfaction surveys, and students undergoing a period of counselling are asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire when their sessions are concluded.

Lesley Ferguson
Director of Student Services
February 2005