

Counselling agreement

The Edinburgh College Counselling Service offers counselling to students, to support their wellbeing and mental health. We offer a brief counselling model, consisting of 6 weekly sessions, normally occurring on the same day and time each week. Within that time, we offer empathy and compassion, focus on building resilience, explore coping strategies, and provide a safe and confidential space for you to reflect and talk about things you might be struggling with.

Confidentiality

The counselling service has a strict code of confidentiality and will not pass on any information regarding your counselling unless in exceptional circumstances.

All counsellors in the Edinburgh College counselling team are members of the BACP (British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists) or COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) and work under their ethical frameworks. Below is a link to the ethical frameworks which the counsellors within the service adhere to.

[BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions](#)

[COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice](#)

The Counselling Service adheres to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We do not share information about your engagement with the service without your permission beforehand (unless in exceptional circumstances, please see breaking confidentiality below). In order to provide the best service to students, we may share information with other staff within the Wellbeing Team. We only share information that is necessary to ensure student's safety is upheld and student's referral between services is as smooth as possible. This could include but is not limited to – GP, Learning Development Tutor, Learning Support Adviser for additional support needs/disability, student funding. You would be required to confirm in writing that you agree for your counsellor to break confidentiality. A counsellor will communicate with you through your college email address, or in case of no reply, contact you by phone.

Breaking confidentiality

Whilst we are a confidential service there are circumstances in which we may break confidentiality, although this is unusual.

If your counsellor feels that either you or someone else is in danger or at risk of harm, they might need to break confidentiality by for example by informing your doctor, social work, or in cases involving an immediate risk to wellbeing, the police. They will always endeavour to discuss this with you first.

Exceptions to Confidentiality:

1. If you or another person is at risk of serious harm
2. If a child or protected adult is at risk of harm or abuse
3. If instructed by the courts to provide information
4. If you share information about a proposed act of terrorism or other illegal act

Recording concern or risk

In case of a concern about your safety, your counsellor might need to log a safeguarding concern with the college safeguarding lead. Your counsellor will always notify you of this in advance. The log will be strictly confidential and exists to prevent students at risk from coming to harm.

If there is a child protection issue or a serious risk to your wellbeing, advice will be sought to establish if there is a need to contact social services following the guidelines outlined within GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) or Adult Protection Guidelines.

Information on GIRFEC:

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Adult Protection

[Adult protection – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

Record Keeping and Data Protection

Following each session, notes are made by your counsellor to record pertinent points, including past experiences and immediate concerns. These are anonymised session notes, which will be securely stored in accordance with GDPR Legislation and BACP/COSCA guidelines. You can learn more about this in the Wellbeing Team privacy notice.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR 2018, students accessing the Student Counselling Service have the right to access all information held about them. In this case a Subject Access Request can be made with assistance of your counsellor.

Complaints

We welcome comments and feedback, and you can send feedback even after ending the counselling process.

If you would like to raise a complaint, then please discuss the issue with your Counsellor in the first instance. If, after further exploration, you wish to formally pursue the complaint then we would ask that you use the Edinburgh College Complaints Procedure.

Sessions

We offer 6-8 sessions on a weekly basis, each lasting 50 minutes. Counselling sessions will still finish at their scheduled time if you arrive late. If your circumstances change and the session time is no longer suitable, please get in touch with your counsellor who will try to offer you an alternative time. Sessions will not take place if you are under the influence of alcohol or other mind-altering substances. Under some circumstances we can offer additional sessions, but this will be reviewed on an individual basis. We offer sessions over MS Teams, as well as on Campus. When working over MS Teams, an E-working info sheet will be provided to help you prepare for a video counselling session.

If you wish to end counselling before the end of your allocated sessions, you are free to do so and we would ask you to let us know so that your place can be re-allocated without a loss of service.

If you miss a session, your counsellor will get in touch with you. If you fail to attend two consecutive counselling sessions and you have not provided at least 24 hours' notice, your counselling may be stopped, and you would be removed from our list.

Cancellation and Holidays

Cancellation of an appointment with less than 24 hours' notice, or failure to show for an appointment, will count towards the number of sessions we can provide, although we will be considerate of unforeseen circumstances. If you need to cancel a session and notify your counsellor more than 24 hours in advance, we will normally try to reschedule or skip a week. Your counsellor will give you as much notice as possible if they are unable to make a session and will try to offer you an alternative time.