
The Counselling Service: General Information for Students



university counselling service

Every year over 1500 students contact us to request help and support during their time at Cambridge and we see over 8.5% of the student population. The University Counselling Service (UCS) offers a wide range of free, confidential help and support. Through providing psychological and therapeutic help, we aim to help you make the most of the academic and social opportunities that the University of Cambridge affords.

Who can be seen at the Student Counselling Service?

All registered undergraduates in residence and graduate students of Cambridge University who are members of a College may use the Service, including students at the Theological Colleges and part-time students.

What kinds of problems can the UCS help with?

Many personal, emotional and psychological problems can be helped through counselling or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Talking treatments may not suit everyone, but many can benefit from discussing common problems such as anxiety, stress and depression, family and/or relationship difficulties, bereavement and loss, sexual problems or identity issues. Counselling can also help with more specific problems such as adjusting to a new culture, social anxiety, perfectionism, loneliness, low self-esteem, trauma, harmful or risky behaviours, and difficulties with food, drugs or alcohol.

We prefer to see students before matters become serious so don't put off coming because you think it would be wasting

our time. Seeking help to address difficulties is a strength and a pro-active way of addressing your concerns.

What support is available at the UCS?

When you contact our Service, we will assess your needs and offer the most appropriate source of support available at the time. This might range from using selected self-help resources, accessing student-led support or a mindfulness course, attending a guided CBT self-help group, coming to one of our workshops or groups, or attending a consultation with a counsellor, CBT therapist or mental health advisor.

What happens in Counselling?

We offer primarily short-term individual counselling and CBT, using a range of approaches as needed. Many people find that just one or two sessions can be helpful. All UCS staff are qualified and professionally accredited counsellors or therapists. The combined experience within our team means we are usually able to offer the most appropriate form of help. If not, we can advise on possible referral options when specialist input or longer-term therapy is needed.

What sort of Groups and Workshops are available?

We offer time-limited groups, some specifically for undergraduates, others for graduate students, which run throughout the calendar year. Each term we also offer one-off workshops and several short-term focused groups, usually running for 4-6 sessions, on topics such as assertiveness, managing your mood, self-esteem, and returning from intermission.

What happens with the Mental Health Advisors?

The UCS has two mental health advisors (MHAs) who offer a range of interventions to students who are in crisis or who are experiencing moderate to severe mental health difficulties. They can provide mental health assessments, ongoing support, liaison with tutors and academic departments, as well as GPs and mental health services.

Students are not able to refer themselves to the MHAs. Referrals may be made by College or University staff, GPs or mental health services.

What if I need more help than the UCS can provide?

If longer-term work is indicated or the Service doesn't have the resources available to meet your needs, we will discuss this with you and provide information on what external resources might be available. In some cases, referral to psychological, therapeutic or psychiatric services in the community may be the most appropriate option.

How long will I have to wait for a counselling appointment?

Waiting times vary throughout the year depending on the demand on the Service, your availability and any factors that indicate the need to prioritise an appointment. Appointments are allocated daily and typical waiting times range from no wait (outside of term) to two or three weeks at peak times. We always take the urgency of the situation into account when allocating. Longer waiting times can occur if you do not confirm appointments on time, repeatedly decline and/or cancel appointments, or have very limited availability.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a crucial aspect of counselling. No information about you will be shared outside the Service unless you give us your explicit consent to disclose this information.

If you see a MHA, at the first appointment you will be asked for your written consent for information to be shared on a need to know basis.

If you choose not to give your consent support will be limited.

Confidentiality may be breached without consent when there are serious grounds for concern about your safety or the well-being of others, or when we are required to do so for legal reasons.

How do I make an appointment?

Visit our website www.counselling.cam.ac.uk and fill in a pre-counselling form.

You will receive an acknowledgement when we receive your form and will be offered an appointment, if appropriate, as soon as possible subject to your availability.

At certain times of year, demand on the Service is high so the more availability you can offer the earlier an appointment may be made.

One-off consultation

You can request a one-off consultation, for example to talk over a specific issue. These are available during full term.

A one-off consultation is not suitable as an emergency or crisis appointment nor is it a route into further counselling.

Telephone the UCS Reception (Tel: 01223 332865) at the following times when appointment allocations are made:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 10.30 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.

Wednesday: 9.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.

Occasionally, at times of high demand, there may be no one-off consultation sessions available and you may be asked to phone again the next day.

Groups

If you are seeing a counsellor s/he can register your interest in attending a group.

Alternatively, or if you're not seeing a counsellor, you can ring UCS Reception and a note will be made of your interest.

Before joining a group we would usually arrange a brief meeting between you and the relevant group facilitator so that you can discuss the group in more detail before making a commitment to join.

Workshops

Ring UCS Reception (Tel: 01223 332865) to register your interest.

Workshops can be attended alongside counselling sessions. However, we do not usually arrange for individual counselling and group work to be undertaken at the same time. We also limit students to one group or course at a time.

What to do in an emergency?

The Counselling Service is not an emergency service. Many Colleges operate a Tutorial system with a tutor on call or have Porters' Lodges that are staffed 24 hours a day.

You might also contact your GP, Samaritans (Tel: 08457 90 90 90), the emergency services, or the A&E Department at Addenbrooke's (Tel: 01223 217118).

Counselling may be appropriate once the immediate crisis has been resolved.

UCS leaflets

We have a series of leaflets on common problems, each containing a brief description of the problem area followed by some self-help strategies. They also give guidance about when to seek further help, with suggestions of where this might be found. Copies of the leaflets are available from the Counselling Service or via the UCS website. You may also find copies in your College or department.

UCS website

The UCS website (www.counselling.cam.ac.uk) contains general information about the Service, and also includes copies of all our leaflets, carefully selected self-help information as well as links to other counselling-related agencies in the Cambridge area.

Contacting UCS

The Counselling Service is open throughout the year except for closures at Christmas and Easter.

Opening times are:

Monday 9.00 a.m. – 5.30 p.m.

Tuesday 9.00 a.m. – 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 9.00 a.m. – 5.30 p.m.

Thursday 9.00 a.m. – 7.30 p.m.

Friday 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Contact details

Telephone: 01223 332865

Email: reception@counselling.cam.ac.uk

Website: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

Where to find us

Cambridge University Counselling Service
2-3 Bene't Place
Lensfield Road
Cambridge
CB2 1EL

You will find us opposite a pub called The Snug and a cycle shop called Lensfield Road Cycles.

Email: counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk

University Counselling Service
2/3 Bene't Place, Lensfield Rd
Cambridge, CB2 1EL

Tel: 01223 332865

Fax: 01223 760990

Email: counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk>