



Support Advice Centre

Our guiding principles

We aim to support students to make their own informed choices about problems in a friendly and professional environment.

We act independently from the University of Southampton.

Who we are

We are a team of 6 trained and experienced members of staff. The Advice Centre is managed by a departmental director, and is made up of a team of advisers and reception staff.

Who the service is for

The University of Southampton Students' Union (SUSU) is a membership organisation, therefore we are unable to advise individuals who are not our members. All University of Southampton students are automatically members of SUSU.

What we do

The Advice Centre offers all members of SUSU free, confidential and independent advice on practical matters.

We provide information, advice and support on a range of matters. Academic, housing and finance matters are our main areas of advice.

Rather than make decisions for our members we provide advice and information to allow them to make decisions for themselves

How we do it

What you can expect from us:

- Free, confidential, impartial advice
- A non-judgmental approach
- Politeness and respect from all staff
- Fairness and equal treatment for all students

What we cannot do:

University of Southampton Students' Union Advice Centre Policy
Document: Advice Centre Charter (online version)
Version: July 2019

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Support Advice Centre

- Make decisions for you
- Tell you what you should do
- Give you legal advice
- Give you immigration advice
- Provide you with counselling
- Continue to work with you if you are aggressive, abusive, display inappropriate behaviour, or appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Support you in a dispute with SUSU

What we expect from you:

- To arrive on time for your appointment or tell us in advance if you cannot attend.
- To be honest when you tell us about your issue and make sure you tell us everything that is relevant.
- To treat all our staff with respect and politeness.
- To bring all relevant documentation and to ensure you read information that we have asked you to read prior to your appointment

Further information on how we can support you with the regulations of the University can be found here: [University Regulations & Meeting - The Student Adviser Role](#)

Impartiality and independence

The Advice Centre is part of SUSU and therefore independent of the University of Southampton. Staff working at the Advice Centre are employees of SUSU and therefore cannot be independent of the organisation and its processes. As a result, Advice Centre staff cannot support students with possible complaints relating to SUSU or SUSU staff.

Conflict of interest

If multiple parties in a dispute approach the Advice Centre each will be allocated a different adviser (within the resources of the service). The advisers concerned will not discuss the case with each other, but may discuss the case with the Director of Advice and Representation. Further details on the Conflict of Interest policy can be found here: [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)



Confidentiality

We hold information electronically in a secure database, separate from The University of Southampton, which is only accessible to authorised SUSU staff. The service provided by the Advice Centre is confidential. Advisers may discuss cases within the team where appropriate. We will not discuss any students, or student cases, outside of the department unless we have permission from the student concerned. Ordinarily, should we need to contact anyone outside the Advice Centre, we will explain this to you and ask you to sign a form or send us an email giving us permission to do so. The exceptions to this are outlined in the section *Breach of confidentiality*.

If parents, guardians or other family members contact us, we will not discuss your case with them, or tell them whether you have visited us unless there are exceptional circumstances and you have given us permission to do so. Further information on our Information for the Parents of Students can be found here: [Information for the Parents of Students](#)

Breach of confidentiality

All staff in the Advice Centre have signed a confidentiality agreement.

We will only break confidentiality without your consent if we have concerns that you or someone else may be at risk of harm or where not doing so would break the law. This will be done in consultation with a senior staff member

In exceptional circumstances it may also be necessary to break confidentiality if you are enrolled on a course that can lead to a professionally recognised qualification and we have concerns about you or your behaviour. Specifically, if we believe that there would be a likelihood of real risk to you or the public if that information was not disclosed. Our concerns will be shared with the Director of Advice and Representation who may deem it necessary to contact relevant staff within the faculty.

Working Procedure

We ask students to turn up on time for appointments and to let us know if they cannot attend. We offer 1 hour appointments with advisers. These will generally consist up to 45 minutes' student meeting time and 15 minutes' writing-up time for the advisers. Students



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who arrive more than 20 minutes late will only be seen at the discretion of an adviser and may instead be offered the next available appointment.

We also offer a drop-in services as advertised.

These are general information sessions that last around 15 minutes

Reception response times

We aim to respond to emails within 24 hours. If you call us between 9am and 5pm (Monday – Friday), we try to answer your call immediately or, if you leave a message, to call you back the same day. There may be times when we are very busy, which may mean we take longer to reply to emails or answer the phone.

Withdrawal of service/change of adviser

Occasionally, it may be necessary to change the adviser you are seeing, for two advisers to be present or to limit /withdraw access to the Advice Centre.

This decision will only be taken after careful consideration and we will outline the reasons.

The following circumstances that could lead to this decision include (NB this list is not exhaustive):

- If you threaten or use violence, or if you are otherwise aggressive or abusive to staff
- You are in breach of the SUSU Rule Book – details can be found here: [SUSU Rules](#)
- If you are or appear to be under the influence of drugs, or alcohol.
- If we identify a conflict of interest (for example if you are involved in a dispute and we are already working with the other party, or if you wish to complain about a member of Union staff)
- If you ask us to collude in illegal or fraudulent behaviour, or to act in a way that is inconsistent with the University regulations.
- If your actions are consistently against the advice you have received in the Advice Centre (in this situation, we will discuss with you whether you feel it is beneficial to continue seeing an adviser)
- If you knowingly provide misleading information
- If you consistently don't turn up for appointments
- If we feel you are making inappropriate or excessive use of Advice Centre resources

University of Southampton Students' Union **Advice Centre Policy**

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Adviser allocation

- We may sometimes decide you should see an adviser with another adviser present
- You will normally be allocated the first available adviser (unless you are seeing an adviser as part of an ongoing case)
- If you have a preference for a male/female adviser please tell reception and we will do our best to accommodate this.
- You may also request a different adviser if you have specific reasons for doing so and you should explain these to reception when you make your appointment (requests will not be unreasonably withheld)
- If you were dissatisfied with the advice you have been given you can contact the Director of Advice and Representation (sonia.cottrell@soton.ac.uk)

Professional boundaries

Students must understand that their relationship with Advice Centre staff is a professional one and they should not expect to have social contact with staff.

Feedback

We want to make sure students are happy with the service we provide and welcome your feedback.

We believe all feedback about the service allows us to continually develop and improve the service we offer.

If there are any aspects of our service you would like to comment on, or you are dissatisfied with the service you receive, you can send your feedback directly to the Director of Advice and Representation (sonia.cottrell@soton.ac.uk) or complete the feedback questionnaire you will be sent after your appointment.

Please refer to our Complaints policy for further details where appropriate –details can be found here: [Complaints](#)