**Advice and Support Centre**

**Policies and Procedures**

**Service Agreement**

The purpose of this agreement is to outline what level of service you, as a student client, can expect from the Students' Union’s Advice and Support Centre (ASC). Also included are recommendations to help you receive the best possible service.

The service from the ASC’s advisers is based on the following principles:

Impartiality

Independence

Non-judgemental

Confidentiality

Empowerment

In return, you are expected to approach advisers in an honest, open and respectful manner, and to make a commitment to the course of action agreed with them.

Our Principles;

**Impartiality -** The ASC advisers will provide you with a range of plausible options, founded on the University’s regulations and based on the advisers’ collective experience. An adviser will not advise you on a particular route but will outline to you the consequences of each possible decision.

**Independence -** The Union is an independent charitable company that is separate from the University, so you can be sure of our impartiality. Our interests lie only in aiding you to reach the outcome that is in your best interests.

**Non-judgemental -** Advisers will not judge how you have got to your current situation. All cases will be considered and advisers will focus on your current situation and possible solutions to it.

**Confidentiality -** Excluding cases where there may be a conflict of interest or a requirement by law, an adviser will only discuss the technicalities of cases with other ASC advisers, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer (who oversees the running of the department) and Students' Union representative officers. No other person will be involved. Advisers will only speak to University staff, or any other third party, on your behalf if they have your permission.

**Empowerment -** The ASC is keen to encourage students to take responsibility for their studies and their own lives. Advisers will contact the University, or other third parties, on your behalf, but you should try all appropriate communication channels first.

**What is expected of you as the Service User**

**Honesty**

The ASC cannot help you unless all the facts surrounding your issues are conveyed to the advisers. Failure to disclose relevant information may affect the outcome of your case.

**Communication**

In order for advisers to perform their role effectively they need to be updated with any developments in your case. If the University, or any third party, communicates directly with you, you should inform the ASC about that correspondence.

**Commitment**

You are asked to keep to your appointments. If you are unable to attend then a cancellation call is expected. Failure to attend consecutive appointments without notification may result in withdrawal of the appointment service, and you may be offered a drop in service only, subject to availability. If you arrive late for an appointment, you may be asked to rearrange if the adviser feels there will not be sufficient time left to deal with your enquiry.

**Respect**

You are reminded that the ASC operates within the Union’s policies (e.g. Equal Opportunities and Harassment), which are available on the Union’s website. Students using the ASC must adhere to the Union’s policies at all times. Any evidence of a breach of Union policies may result in an investigation and formal disciplinary action by the Union and, where appropriate, the University.

**General Procedures**

**ASC Advisers**

Your first point of contact will usually be via the ASC reception. Advisers are permanent members of the Union’s staff and have specialist training on issues such as the academic regulations, accommodation, finance and debt, and student visas. Where appropriate, advisers will ‘case build’ by offering you appointments and consultations, researching your case and engaging in dialogue with the University, and third parties, on your behalf.

**Drop Ins**

We encourage you to drop in to the ASC during the advertised drop in sessions (currently 10am-4pm each weekday) as this is the quickest way to have your query addressed in the first instance. If you are unable to attend the advertised drop in sessions, an appointment can be made subject to adviser availability.

Further to drop in, a follow up appointment may also be necessary to ensure the adviser has sufficient time set aside to go through your case thoroughly with you.

**Appointments**

Appointments should be made via the ASC reception and will be offered subject to adviser availability. However you contact the ASC, whether by email, phone or in person, we will aim to acknowledge your enquiry within two working days.

Same day appointments will not usually be made unless in an emergency. You are encouraged to attend the daily drop in session 10am-4pm to have your query heard in person on the same day.

**Officer Representation**

You may request representation at a University meeting or hearing via the Students' Union Reception.

This service is subject to availability. The representative, usually an elected Students’ Union officer, will be fully briefed by the adviser on your case, and there will be ongoing communication between the adviser and the representative to ensure your case is kept up-to-date.

The representation will consist of:

\* Meeting support

The representative is allowed to accompany you to clarify any enquiries and support you with any questions posed to you. At your request, the representative can take summary notes (however, not verbatim minutes).

\* Informed feedback

The representative can help you reflect and offer support on the next of the process, as well as relay approved decisions and information back to the adviser.

\* Guidance on Regulations

Regulations can be detailed, and representatives can explain and clarify procedures before, during and after meetings.

**Counselling**

Personal circumstances may be discussed in relation to your issue, but advice will not be offered on how to deal with your emotions. The ASC advisers are not trained counsellors, but they will be able to refer you to local counselling services.

**Referrals**

When appropriate, advisers may refer or signpost you to other services, either within the University of externally.

**Legal Advice**

The ASC does not provide legal advice or representation. We can, however, signpost you to external legal services, although we are unable to recommend any particular service.

**Case Closures**

Your case may be closed if:

\* Your issue is resolved.

\* In the professional opinion of an adviser, there is nothing else the ASC can do for you in this instance.

\* You fail to engage with advice given to you by an adviser

\* You fail to respond to three ‘contact points’, including but not limited to appointments, emails, texts and phone calls.

\* You breach Union policies, such as the Equal Opportunities and Harassment policies. This may also result in disciplinary action against you by the Union and the University. We reserve the right to withhold our services immediately from any student who may have breached the Union’s policies, pending further investigations.

If you disagree with a decision to close your case you may appeal to the Students’ Union Deputy Chief Executive Officer. If your case is closed you will not be prevented from using the ASC service again if a new issue arises, except where the closure of a previous case led to a ban from using Union services.

**Complaints**

Complaints against an adviser or any aspect of the ASC service can be made using the Union’s complaints procedure, which is available from the Union’s website and Union reception points.

**Code of Conduct**

Guidelines also run alongside the Students' Union Equal Opportunities policy.

These guidelines establish what would be considered as incidents of unreasonable behaviour and are separate to the established disciplinary offences stated in the UWSU Bye-Laws.

The UWSU aims to provide premises for our members and visitors to feel welcome and to ensure they are able to enjoy the facilities in safety and comfort.

The UWSU aims to provide our staff members and sabbatical officers with the ability to operate in a safe and secure environment.

Behaviours that are considered unreasonable, and can result in authorised action being taken, are as follows:

1. Any person who behaves in a manner that would be considered anti-social and that, in a reasonable person’s opinion, would cause offence – for example, spitting.

2. Any person who causes damage to UWSU property that requires unscheduled cleaning, repairing or replacing – for example, graffiti.

3. Any person who behaves aggressively, harasses, intimidates or verbally abuses another person.

This is not an exhaustive list. All of these behaviours may necessitate complaints being made and/or removal from the UWSU premises. Repeated occurrences of these types of behaviour are likely to lead to a higher level of exclusion and/or withdrawal of facility usage.

**Equal Access**

ASC is easily accessible for wheel chair users. Each office is wheelchair friendly with easy access to ensure security and privacy. There is a toilet fitted with a RADAR lock in the Students' Union, a key can be obtained from SU reception or the ASC reception.

Endeavouring to meet the diverse needs of the student population the service is committed to anti-discriminatory practice in all its work with students and the public.

Updated April 2014