

University of Manchester Counselling Service Complaints Procedure

1. Preliminary Enquiries

- 1.1 If you are considering whether to make a complaint, you are very welcome to make preliminary enquiries or have informal discussions by telephone or by appointment with the Head of Counselling or one of their colleagues.

2. Making a complaint

- 2.1 Details of the complaint must be addressed in writing to the Head of Counselling and marked confidential. It must state the nature of complaint, give relevant details of dates and name the member(s) of staff concerned. Where the complaint is about the Head of Counselling, the complaint should be sent to the Head of Student Support and Services in the first instance.
- 2.2 A complaint should be made as near as possible to the events concerned, usually within a month, and in exceptional circumstances no later than within a year of the incident to which it refers. The person complained against will be notified of the complaint.
- 2.3 In making the complaint, it is helpful for the complainant to give some indication of the outcome he or she hopes for from the complaint procedure. He or she should also indicate the outcome of any action taken to raise and resolve the matter directly with the person complained against.
- 2.4 On receipt of the complaint, the Head of Counselling will consider the complaint and make a judgement on the complaint with recommendations according to the steps detailed below. The Counselling Service will not consider a complaint that is already being considered by another procedure elsewhere either inside or outside the University.

3. Investigating and adjudicating a complaint using the Complaints Procedure of the Counselling Service.

If the Head of Counselling in their preliminary considerations and consultations finds that the complaint is to be informally or formally handled by the Counselling Service's own investigatory and adjudicatory procedure, this will proceed as follows:

- 3.1 The Head of Counselling will arrange to meet with the complainant, where necessary, to clarify the circumstances surrounding the complaint. The complainant may be accompanied by another person of their choosing at this meeting if they so wish.

- 3.2 The person or persons complained about will then be invited to a meeting with the Head of Counselling. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for them to respond to the complaint. Where it is a general complaint about the Counselling Service, the Head will also consult with any other parties as appropriate and with respect to confidentiality and fairness.
- 3.3 In consultation with a senior colleague, the Head of Counselling will make a written report of their investigation. This will normally be completed within four weeks of receipt of the formal complaint. This report will summarise the background to the complaint and the outcome of the investigations. It will identify steps to be taken in response to the complaint which may be the following:
 - 3.3.1 Recommending and/or carrying out changes in policy and practice in the Counselling Service.
 - 3.3.2 Recommending and/or requiring further training or supervision for the person complained about.
 - 3.3.3 In cases where a serious breach of professional conduct has been found, the Head of Counselling, in addition to any of the above actions, will refer the matter to the professional body to which the counsellor belongs, and/or to the appropriate authority within the University, and in the light of the University's complaints procedures, policies and codes of conduct.
 - 3.3.4 In the event of the complaint being in part or entirely unfounded the report will give a clear account of the grounds for not supporting or not being able to resolve or clarify the complaint.
- 3.4 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the way in which his or her complaint has been dealt with, he or she may appeal in writing to the Head of Student Support and Services /The Registrar and Secretary.