

THE STUDENT ADVICE CENTRE SERVICE STANDARDS GUIDE

What You Can Expect From Us

Free

The Advice Service provides free advice to all students who are studying at The University of Chester and partner institutions. It provides advice on issues including academic appeals, academic integrity, professional suitability, disciplinary matters, complaints, accommodation issues, the financial assistance fund, and Lucy Blackburn fund.

Independent

Chester Students' Union is its own charitable organisation and all advice offered from the service is independent of all external and third parties including the University of Chester

Impartial

The Advice Service will give impartial advice to students making sure that all options are explored with the student and making sure that all consequences of each option are explained without prejudicing the student to a particular viewpoint.

Informative

We will make sure that the advice we give to students is informative to allow students to make their own decisions about the best way forward. The advisors will not make decisions on behalf of students but will explore all options and give students the information needed to make their own decisions.

Non-Judgemental

We will assist and advise all students and consider all cases regardless of their current situation and how it arose. We will not ask questions or ask for information unless we feel it is relevant to the case.

Equality and Respect

In line with our equal opportunities policy we provide equal access to all students and do not discriminate on any grounds including, but not exclusive to disability, gender, race, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, or marriage and civil partnership.

Confidentiality

All information that students share with us will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. An advisor may share information with another advisor within the Advice Service but will not share any information with a 3rd party outside the service without the students' full consent. All appointments are conducted in a dedicated private advice room and our e-mails are accessed by Advice Service staff only.

We may break confidentiality if we feel that the student is at risk of harming themselves or others. Further information is contained in our confidentiality policy.

Honesty

Advisors will provide honest advice and guidance based on experience and knowledge of relevant regulations, procedures and processes. Advisors cannot guarantee a successful outcome for any case they deal with. The advisors will not provide any advice on issues outside their field of competence. If an advisor cannot give advice on any issue then they may refer the student to another source of assistance such as Student Futures or an external service like Shelter.

What We Expect from You

Respect

We expect all students to treat our staff with respect. The service will be withdrawn if a student exhibits verbally abusive, threatening, discriminatory or violent behaviour toward a member of Union staff or any other persons accessing the service. Service will also be withdrawn if, despite verbal or written warnings, a student continues to exhibit offensive or insulting behaviour toward a member of Union staff or any other persons accessing the service. This can include behaviour where a student is rude or unpleasant or repeatedly uses inappropriate language.

Responsibility

We are here to provide advice and support on your case but you must take responsibility for progressing your case. This means that you must submit forms and take necessary action on your case within set time limits as per University policy or agreement with your Advisor, and ensure that you follow advice provided in a timely way.

Honesty

Students are expected to be open and honest about their situation to enable us to give the best advice possible. Failure to disclose all relevant information in good time may limit the advice we can give and affect the outcome of your case.

Communication

We would like students to keep us up to date with any developments in their case. If the student hears from the University or another 3rd party then they should inform the Advice Centre.

Commitment

It is important that all students arrive to any appointments in good time. Failure to attend an appointment or arrive on time will result in the loss of the appointment. We will cancel an appointment if the student does not show within 10 minutes of when it was due to start. Where possible students should notify the Advice Service if they know they can't attend or are going to be late. We expect students to fulfil any course of action agreed between them and an advisor. Failure to carry out agreed actions or to present relevant documents and information can considerably delay any further action in a case.

Information about the service

Accessing the Service

Email

Students can get advice by email by contacting CSUAdvice@chester.ac.uk or using our contact form via the CSU website. We aim to respond to all emails within two working days of receiving them.

Drop in

We run a drop-in service at the Parkgate Road campus from Tuesday-Thursday from 1PM until 3.30PM. This is on a first come first seen basis.

Appointments

Face to face appointments can be made during our core working hours (excluding drop in times). Appointments can be made by emailing the advice service on CSUadvice@chester.ac.uk.

An advisor is based at the Warrington site permanently on Monday, Friday and rotating Wednesdays. Advisors provide outreach to all our other satellite sites.

Appointments are usually booked for 30 minute slots unless advisors are made aware that additional time is needed because of the type of query.

If students are more than 10 minutes late for their appointment, the appointment will be cancelled and the appointment slot may be given to another student. 3 or more missed appointments can result in access to face-to-face advice being restricted, and advice provided via email only.

Students should bring any documents, e-mails, letters and other materials that are relevant to the case as the details in these items may be central to the advice we provide.

Advisors will send an email following the meeting, summarising the advice given and detailing any further information.

We only provide appointments to current University of Chester (or partner institution) students. If you have withdrawn from your studies, been withdrawn, graduated, or if removed from studies we can only offer you advice if you open a case (either via our Contact Form or via Appointment) within 3 months of the date that you ceased to be a UoC student.

Telephone appointments

Students can also make telephone appointments by emailing us or can call our Chester office during our drop in.

Representation and Advocacy

The Advice Service staff may be able to represent students at meetings and panels held under the University procedures such as those relating to the disciplinary or professional suitability, as well as some other informal and conciliatory meetings

within the University. Please note the advisors cannot answer questions on students' behalf.

This is subject to the availability of an advisor and at least 48 hours' notice is normally required in order to allow time for the adviser to familiarise themselves with the case.

Withdrawal of service

In some circumstances we may feel it is necessary to withdraw a student's access to the service. Reasons for this include:

- Where we find that there is a Conflict of Interest for the advisor or the service. In most cases a student will be provided with another advisor rather than service being withdrawn. For more information you can see our Conflict of Interest policy.
- If we find that a student deliberately withholds information material to their case or lies on issues material to the case. This can compromise the reputation of the advisor and/or the service we provide.
- A student exhibits verbally abusive, threatening, discriminatory or violent behaviour toward a member of Union staff or any other persons accessing the service.
- A student exhibits offensive or insulting behaviour toward a member of Union staff or any other persons accessing the service. This can include behaviour where a student is rude or unpleasant or repeatedly uses inappropriate language.
- A student attempts to involve an advisor in immoral or illegal pursuits.
- A student persistently and without good cause fails to keep to appointments or in other ways wastes an advisor's time, such as by continually seeking advice on a topic but never acting upon it. We may withdraw service on particular cases, but not withdraw your ability to access the service entirely. We may also in some circumstances restrict your access to email, versus face-to-face advice. In others, we reserve the right to withdraw service entirely.
- If the level or type of service required is beyond the scope of the service. In this case we would normally refer you to a suitable alternative. Please see our referral policy.
- A student has made a serious complaint against the service and this is currently being investigated

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Where an advisor believes that a restriction to or withdrawal from the service is necessary, this will be discussed with the Head of Advice & Policy. Any student that is withdrawn from the service will be notified in writing and directed to the Students' Union complaints procedure.

Case Closure

We may consider a case closed if:

- The case is completed and therefore no further action is required.
- You are no longer engaging with the case. In the event that this happens you will be emailed if there is no contact after four weeks. We will ask if you still require our support and if so you would need to contact us within 1 week. If you do not contact us after this your case will be closed.

Feedback and Complaints

We are always looking at ways to improve the Advice Service and welcome feedback from students. Students can write to us to let us know how we can improve our service or fill in our online survey

here: <https://www.chestersu.com/surveys/closecase/>

You can find details of our complaints procedure and all relevant policies and governing documents here:

<https://www.chestersu.com/your-union/csupolicies/>