



# Advice Service

## Confidentiality Policy

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Worcester Students' Union Advice Service  
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## 1. Definitions

Worcester Students' Union	Worcester Students' Union (WSU) is a registered charity number 1145192.
Advice Service	The service provided to clients by Student Advisors. The Membership Services Manager and Chief Executive may be included in the Advice Service Team's decisions regarding breaching confidentiality.
Welcome Desk	The Students' Union's reception desk is called the Welcome Desk and is staffed by student staff called Welcome Desk Assistants.
Clients	All prospective, current and graduated students of The University of Worcester.

## 2. Confidentiality Statement

The Student Advice Service is committed to providing a confidential advice service to its users. The Student Advice Service believes that principles of confidentiality must be integrated across all aspects of services and management. The Advice Service believes its users deserve the right to confidentiality to protect their interests and safeguard the service. The following will be displayed in the advice office:

The Advice Service offers a confidential service - nothing you tell us will be shared with any other organisation or individual without your permission. There are rare occasions where a breach of confidentiality may be deemed necessary. These are detailed within our Confidentiality Policy. If a decision is made to breach confidentiality the client will be informed before any action is taken by the Advice Service.

## 3. Definition of Confidentiality

The Student Advice Service understands confidentiality to mean that no information regarding a client shall be given directly or indirectly to any third party which is external to the Advice Service without that client's prior expressed consent to disclose such information.

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The Advice Service recognises that all clients should be able to access the Advice Service in confidence and that no other person should ever know that they have used the Advice Service.

The Advice Service staff will, from time to time, seek advice and guidance from each other or their line manager in relation to individual cases. All staff will ensure that no discussions relating to an individual user of the Advice Service take place outside of the Student Union's premises nor in the presence of Union staff not involved in the Service.

It is necessary that Welcome Desk Assistants who book appointments on behalf of Students Advisors are aware of the names of clients accessing the Advice Service. The Welcome Desk does not store any individual client's case details and once an Initial Enquiry Form has been passed to the Advice Team it is destroyed.

The Advice Service recognises that users need to feel secure in using the service in a confidential manner. The Advice Service will ensure all users are afforded confidential interview space.

The Advice Service will not confirm the user's presence in the Students' Union or his/her use of the service without obtaining the user's consent.

### 4. Statistical Recording

The Advice Service is committed to effective statistical recording of the service's clients to monitor take-up of service and to identify any policy issues. It also enables the Union to identify areas of student need and work with the University to improve the student experience. To this end, like many other Students' Union Advice Services nationally, it securely records case notes and client details on a bespoke database, designed for this purpose.

The Advice Service will make fortnightly anonymised statistical reports to the Chief Executive in order to monitor and improve the service we provide to students. In addition to this, the Advice Service produces regular anonymised statistical reports to the Students Unions' Board of Trustees meetings. These meetings occur a minimum of four times a year.

Upon closing a case record, the Advice Service will contact a client to invite feedback regarding their use of the service. All feedback is anonymous.

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It is the Student Advisors' responsibility to ensure all statistical records or reports given to third parties, such as to support funding applications, monitoring reports for the local authority are anonymised and sanitised, so individuals cannot be recognised.

### 5. Case Records

It is the Student Advisors' responsibility to ensure all case records are kept securely. All PCs will be locked when left unattended. All case records and information relating to service users will be locked away at the end of each working day. This includes note books, copies of correspondence, calculation sheets and any other sources of information. Electronic case work information is stored securely to prevent unauthorised access. Case files are kept for a minimum of six years before being destroyed.

### 6. Expressed Consent to Give Information

It is the responsibility of Student Advisors to ensure that where any action is agreed to be taken by the Advice Service on behalf of a client, that client must firstly sign a Form of Authority. This should be placed on the client's file.

### 7. Conflict of Interest

Where conflict of interest is identified, Student Advisors are responsible for taking appropriate action to manage this. The Advice Service will always notify the client of the conflict and recognises that this notification may inadvertently draw attention to clients' use of the Advice Service (see the Conflict of Interest Policy for further information).

The Advice Service defines a conflict of interest as:

- Clients who are in conflict with Worcester Students' Union
- Clients making a complaint against a Student Advisor
- Two opposing parties in a dispute

## 8. Breaches of Confidentiality

The Advice Service recognises that occasions may arise where individual Student Advisors feel they need to breach confidentiality. It is recognised, however, that any breach of confidentiality may damage the reputation of the Advice Service and therefore has to be treated with the most serious of approaches. If at any time the decision is made to breach confidentiality the client will be informed before any action is taken by the Advice Service.

The decision to breach confidentiality will be taken on a case by case basis. Reasons for the breaching confidentiality may include the following:

- If the client discloses information that may indicate risk to children.
- If an Advisor believes that a client could cause danger to themselves or to others.
- If the client gives information which indicates a possible terrorist threat.

On occasions where a team member feels confidentiality should be breached the following steps must be taken:

1. The Student Advisor should raise the matter immediately with the Membership Services Manager, discussing the issues involved in the case and explaining why they feel confidentiality should be breached.
2. The Membership Services Manager should discuss with the Student Advisor what options are available in each set of circumstances. A record of this discussion will be placed on the client's case record.
3. The Membership Services Manager is responsible for making an initial decision on whether confidentiality should be breached. If the Membership Services Manager decides that confidentiality is to be breached then they should take the following steps:
  - The Membership Services Manager should contact the Chief Executive and brief them on the full facts of the case, ensuring they do not breach confidentiality in doing so. The Membership Services Manager should seek authorisation to breach confidentiality from the Chief Executive.
  - If the Chief Executive agrees to breaching confidentiality, a full written report on the case should be made and any action agreed undertaken.
  - The Membership Services Manager is responsible for ensuring all activities are actioned.

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- If the Chief Executive does not agree to breach confidentiality then this is the final decision of the Advice Service.
- In no circumstances should any breach of confidentiality be discussed at this stage with any other staff. This is to ensure that any future complaints or investigations arising from breach in confidentiality can be carried out in an independent manner.

## 9. Legislative Framework

The Advice Service will monitor this policy to ensure it meets statutory and legal requirements including the Data Protection Act, Children's Act, Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act. Training on the policy will include these aspects.

## 10. Ensuring the Effectiveness of the Policy

All elected officers of Worcester Students' Union will receive a copy of the Confidentiality Policy. Existing and new workers will be introduced to the confidentiality policy via induction and training. The policy will be reviewed annually and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Executive Committee via the Chief Executive.

Date procedure was agreed:.....January 2009  
Date of review:..... March 2016  
Next review due..... March 2017  
Person responsible for review: .....Membership Services Manager