

How to access the Students' Unions' Advice Service (SUAS)?

To address some issues, you can find some self-help information on the SUAS website.

See the sections on academic information (www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/academic), welfare information (www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/welfare) and (College and University) rules and regulations (www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/rules). If this information does not answer your query, and you would like further advice or to talk through your options, contact the Advice Service.

Contacting the Advice Service

Ring (01223 746999), email (advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk), or fill in this contact form (www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/contacts/form). Note that the Service is open 9am-5pm Monday - Friday. Usually, students email with a brief outline of their issue or query, and arrange an appointment where this can be discussed further; appointments often allow advisors to better understand your circumstances and explore your options with you in the appropriate depth required. How you choose to access the service though will depend on your individual preferences (e.g. due to disability), location (you may be intermitting or on vacation) and the issue at hand (it might be a simple query). You can also drop-in (Tuesday and Thursdays, 12-2pm) - see the section on 'Visiting the Advice Service' below. Note that drop-in sessions may be limited to 20-minute slots; if there is still more to discuss and explore, you may be encouraged to make a follow-up appointment. Where necessary, the Advice Service offers Skype meetings, though in-person meets are preferred.

Receiving a response

An initial response (to an email, the contact form, or a call) is usually received within 1-2 working days. The response may answer your query simply, or say the Advisor plans to do further research into the topic and ask you several clarification questions to help them do this. If you've not already asked to make an appointment, and your query is more complex, with multiple options to explore, it's likely the Advisor will ask to make an appointment with you, if you are Cambridge-based. It's fine if you don't want to make an appointment: the advisor will still be able to provide quality support and advice to you via phone, email, or even Skype.

Visiting the Advice Service

The SUAS Office and Consultation Room are located in the Students' Unions' Building at 17 Mill Lane (Upper Ground Floor, 17 Mill Lane, Cambridge, CB2 1RX). *[To enter the Students' Unions' Building, enter via the side entrance off Silver St, looking for the CUSU and GU logos.]* When you arrive in the Students' Unions' Building, head to Reception or straight to the SUAS Office, just beyond the Reception. When your advisor is ready to see you, they will warmly greet you and direct you to the consultation room (unless it's a drop-in and there is already some one in it, in which case you may be seen in the office, which also has padded seating.) The consultation room (*see picture*) is located non-obviously - off the corridor adjacent to the SUAS Office. The room is laid out in a relaxed way, with a sofa and an armchair; it's not like a formal meeting. There are tissues available, should you need them.



Accessibility

The Students' Unions' building has step-free access (there's a lift to the Upper Ground Floor), and there are gender-neutral toilets and a wheelchair-accessible toilet nearby. You can see more access information about the CUSU/GU building here: www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/access-around-university/administrative-sport-and-social-facilities. If you have any other requirements, such as a hearing loop or large print text, or queries, let SUAS know.

Meeting the Advisor

To begin, your Advisor will talk through the Advice Service's confidentiality policy with you (see section below on confidentiality), and ask you to fill in a simple form with basic details such as your name and course. From this point, you will be able to talk about whatever issue has brought you to the Service. This will be done via email, phone or Skype if you are not visiting the Service in person.

You talk; an advisor listens

During a meeting (or email or telephone interaction), you will be able to discuss your query or situation in much more depth, and be able to explore your options, with the advisor. It's absolutely fine if you find it difficult to talk about problems you have, or don't know where to start. The advisor has a lot of experience, and will be very patient and warm with how they respond to you. Through talking, you will be able to organise your thoughts and explore your options. The Advice Service considers you to be an autonomous individual capable of making your own decisions, so won't try to solve your problems for you: rather, they will provide guidance, support and information to help you come to your own conclusions.

Impartial, non-judgmental and non-directive advice

In line with their Code of Practice (www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/about/codeofpractice), the Advice Service is impartial and non-judgmental, and will provide non-directive advice. That's to say, they will tell you what you *could*, rather than *should* do. You don't have to do anything: SUAS is just there to listen and support you in exploring your options. Moreover, though SUAS is well acquainted with other services, including colleges, it remains completely independent of them. The service thus provides an important complement to support received from your tutor, friends or other significant figures.

Confidentiality

SUAS is a confidential service. This means that no information about any student will be passed to anyone outside of the Service (including tutors and parents) without prior, explicit consent, except in rare circumstances. Advisors will not confirm that any student has visited the Service without the student's consent. Where there is a dispute between two students and both students are using the Advice Service, normal confidentiality regulations will apply. For more information, see their Confidentiality Policy: www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/about/confidentiality).

Moving forwards and following up

When the meeting is drawing to a close, it will be summarised and future action points, if any, will be discussed (e.g. what research the advice officer needs to do, or what other services you plan to contact). Most meetings are followed up by an email, so don't worry if you forget what was said or think of something else afterwards. You will discuss and agree with the Advisor whether you will be meeting again, talking on the phone or communicating by email, and when you expect to hear from them if they are carrying out any research. Your needs will depend on the nature of your problem - for example, you may require continued support in writing and proofreading a complaint. If you just came in for a chat that does not require any follow-up though, that is fine too.

Feedback

You will be asked to fill in a feedback survey. Your response is greatly valued and is important for the development of the service.

Other queries

Feel free to get in contact with SUAS as many times as you need, about the same or different issues. Remember that there is some information on the SUAS website: www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk.