

Service Standards

This document outlines what you can expect from our service, what we expect from you and information about how we manage your information.

April 18

Beds SU, Campus Centre, Park Square, Luton LU1 3JU

Email: be.supported@beds.ac.uk

Website: www.bedssu.co.uk/advice

Beds SU Advice Service - Service Standards

1. Aims and Principles of the Service

- 1.1. Beds SU Advice Service aims to empower students by providing information, guidance and support to all full members of Beds SU.
- 1.2. Advice is free, confidential, impartial, independent, non-judgmental and accessible to all full members of Beds SU, as stipulated in the Beds SU Bylaws. We do not advise non-member parties (for example, landlords) wishing to take action against a student. They will be signposted to an appropriate service provider.
- 1.3. We aim to give accurate, relevant and comprehensive advice, enabling students to make informed choices about their course of action in the following areas: academic disputes, student financial matters, housing, wellbeing and safety.
- 1.4. Where necessary and appropriate, Beds SU Advice Service may undertake mediation, representation and casework for students in order to help them resolve queries in a more proactive way.
- 1.5. We endeavour to identify trends and social policy issues that affect a significant number of students at the University of Bedfordshire and are proactive in resolving or raising awareness of them.
- 1.6. We contribute to the retention of students at the University of Bedfordshire by empowering, educating and supporting them.
- 1.7. We are committed to equality and uphold the values outlined in the Beds SU Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 1.8. Where appropriate, we share professional knowledge with other university departments and key stakeholders in relation to student trends or wider policies to develop strategies to benefit the student body; subject to conditions set in the Bed SU Data Protection Policies and Procedures.

2. Legislative Overview

- 2.1. Beds SU Advice Service staff work within the framework outlined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Beds SU and Beds SU Bylaws.
- 2.2. Beds SU are in certificate of Employers' Liability Insurance.
- 2.3. Beds SU Advice Service is a member of Advice UK and the National Homelessness Advice Service and work within their membership requirements.
- 2.4. Beds SU Advice Service staff are bound by UK Legislation.

3. Service Operations

Operations

- 3.1. Beds SU Advice Service is open Monday to Friday (excluding Union, University and national holidays and staff development days).
- 3.2. It is predominantly based on the Luton and Bedford campuses, but can operate on all core University of Bedfordshire sites.

- 3.3. The commitment to quality casework, operation and training means that we will adhere to the above opening times and ask students to respect this. Any deviation of the opening times is at the discretion of the Be Supported Team and/or individual Advisor.
- 3.4. We operate a drop-in service, bookable appointment slots, telephone and email advice service.
- 3.5. Face-to-face appointments are available on both the Luton and Bedford campuses. Telephone appointments are available to all students on request.
- 3.6. Beds SU Advice Service staff do not give advice to students outside the place of work, unless specific permission has been sought by management.
- 3.7. We reserve the right to suspend the service in the interest of personal safety and uphold the values of the Beds SU Safeguarding Policy.

Communication

- 3.8. Appointments can only be requested via the online booking request form (found on the Beds SU website), by emailing be.supported@beds.ac.uk or with a member of the Be Supported Team. We endeavour to send confirmation of the appointment time, date, venue and Advisor within 3 working days after the initial request is made.
- 3.9. An Advisor (member of the Be Supported Team) will be allocated to a student based on availability, suitability, and where possible, expertise. Where a conflict of interest concern arises, the Casework Handling Procedures are applied. No single Advisor will be able to represent different students involved in the same case.
- 3.10. We reserve the right to cancel appointments at short notice, but will offer an alternative appointment slot if this occurs.
- 3.11. Where a student is required to attend a panel or a hearing e.g. a Fitness to Practice or Academic Conduct Panel, and would like a member of the Be Supported Team to attend with them, we would need notification of the request at the earliest opportunity in order to maximise the chance of having an Advisor available. There may be occasions where we cannot attend because of availability and/or location.
- 3.12. We endeavour to respond to all emails within 3 working days, but this may not always be possible during very busy periods or office closure.

Casework

- 3.13. The Advisor will not take any action on behalf of the student or discuss casework with a third party without first discussing it with them and gaining their consent.
- 3.14. It is the responsibility of the student to choose a course of action. In such circumstances, the Advisor will discuss with the student the appropriateness of their actions. The student will however be offered information on how to pursue their chosen course of action by themselves.
- 3.15. Where a third-party contacts us in relation to a student's case, for example a member of a university team, that information will be recorded on the student's case record and the student will be contacted with an update.
- 3.16. The student will be kept fully informed of all developments in connection with their case. Beds SU Advice Service also expect to be kept informed of any developments the student becomes aware of.
- 3.17. Advisors will aim to deal with casework promptly (within the constraints of their workload) and will endeavour to work within the key dates of each case, as outlined by the student.
- 3.18. We do not continue to advise a student after we have exhausted all practical avenues of enquiry.

Confidentiality

3.19. Beds SU Advice Service offer all students a confidential service and will not disclose any information to another party, unless the student has given permission for them to do so or in the rare circumstances outlined below:

- Court Orders: confidentiality may be broken if Beds SU Advice Service is ordered to do so by a court; in these instances, independent legal advice will be sought before doing so.
- Harm: if, in the opinion of the Advisor, a student is in danger of harming themselves or others, or if there is a disclosure of harm being caused by a third party to others, Advisors may have a duty of care and reserve the right to breach confidentiality. In these cases, the Beds SU Safeguarding Policy is applied, which may include seeking advice from a third party.
- Legal: where Beds SU Advice Service is legally required to do so, for example, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1989).

In the above circumstances and where appropriate, the student affected would be informed prior to any breach.

3.20. Beds SU Advice Service are bound by the Beds SU Privacy Policy, Data Protection Policies and Procedures, Retention Policy, Security Policy, Data Storage Policy, Internal Data Reporting Policy and Procedure: found at www.bedssu.co.uk.

3.21. Students should be offered use of a confidentiality room on the sites where Beds SU hold premises.

3.22. Where Beds SU Advice Service Advisors make contact with a student by telephone, they must ensure that no reference is made as to the purpose of the call to any third parties unless the student has given consent which must be recorded in their file.

3.23. All students who receive advice from Bed SU Advice will be asked to complete a Student Record Sheet. This asks for personal contact details, course details, demographic data (optional) and a declaration permitting Beds SU Advice Service to store their data in line with the Bed SU Data Storage Policy. This is to verify membership status and to fulfill obligations under the 1994 Education Act.

3.24. An additional form permitting us to speak to a third party on their behalf may also be sought.

3.25. If a student contacts the Beds SU Advice Service via telephone or email, a Student Record Sheet will be emailed to them for completion and signature, and will need to be returned.

3.26. All advice given, actions taken, letters written or received, emails sent or received and case outcomes are recorded in digital casefiles on AdvicePro; a fully-managed, secure web-based, third party case management system developed specifically for the advice sector. AdvicePro complies with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Beds SU policy.

3.27. Records enable Beds SU to monitor the advice being issued and check for accuracy. Advice may be shared with other Advice Service Advisors to provide continuity of service in the event of staff absence.

3.28. Access to AdvicePro is limited to the Be Supported Team and the Head of Membership Services and Engagement within Beds SU. Advice Pro employees may also have access for technical support of software and for no other purpose or use. Advice Pro shares social Policy themes captured on Advice Pro in an anonymous manner with the National Union of Students.

- 3.29. Case records are retained and securely held for six years and then destroyed in line with the Beds SU Retention Policy. This is to protect Beds SU and the student if any issue arises after the event, e.g. litigation, which may necessitate reference to recorded details.
- 3.30. Case records remain the property of the Beds SU Advice Service. Students do however have the right to:
- Be informed about what data is being held about them and how it is processed and managed: outlined in the Beds Data SU Privacy Statement.
 - Access the data that is held about them, they should contact su.data@beds.ac.uk.
 - Rectification if the data that is held about them is inaccurate or incomplete. Students can request this work to be undertaken by contacting su.data@beds.ac.uk.
 - The erasure of the data Beds SU hold about them, which is also known as the right to be forgotten. This will be considered withdrawal from the service. The right of erasure can be requested by contacting su.data@beds.ac.uk.
 - Restrict processing of the data we hold about them. This means not deleting the data, but placing certain restriction or total restrictions on how Beds SU process it. The restricting of processing can be requested by contacting su.data@beds.ac.uk.
 - Receive the data we hold on them in an open source format such as in a CSV format. Data requests can be requested by contacting su.data@beds.ac.uk.
 - Object to the way their data it being held, processed or managed. This can be done by contacting us on su.data@beds.ac.uk.
- 3.31. It is the responsibility of the Be Supported team to ensure that all statistical information provided to third parties is given in anonymous form so that individuals cannot be identified.
- 3.32. Should a student have a complaint about the management of their data they should contact the Data Protection Champion on su.data@beds.ac.uk who will follow the Beds SU Complaints Procedure to investigate the matter.
- 3.33. Students also have a right to also complain to the UK Regulator of Data Protection or raise a concern to the Information Commissioners Office.

4. Expectations and Conduct

- 4.1. A 30-minute appointment will be offered as standard to all who have a pre-booked an appointment. Longer appointments can be allocated at the discretion of the Advisor.
- 4.2. Advisors will be open, friendly, professional and give students their undivided attention and the necessary time to talk through their problems within the confines of their allocated time. We expect students to treat all Beds SU staff with respect at all times.
- 4.3. If a drop-in session is particularly busy, we may not be able to see all students who arrive and we will therefore offer an alternative time slot.
- 4.4. We aim to see students within 10 minutes of their appointment time or will provide them with an explanation if we are unable to.
- 4.5. We expect students to keep appointments made for them and to arrive on time and if at all possible to inform us if they are unable to keep the appointment, failure to do so may result in another appointment not being offered; this is at the discretion of the Be Supported Team and/or Advisor.

- 4.6. We usually do not see students who arrive more than 10 minutes late for their appointment slot; any deviation from this is at the discretion of the individual Advisor. This is because we do not consider that this gives enough time give advice to the best of our ability due to the time constraints. It may also adversely affect another student's appointment.
- 4.7. If we have committed to follow up something for a student then we will aim to act promptly on all agreed work, giving an indication of when they can expect to hear from us or call back. We also expect students to keep us up-to-date with any developments that occur.
- 4.8. We will be open during our advertised opening hours and, if for any reason, we do have to close, students will be advised as far in advance as possible via the Beds SU website.
- 4.9. We encourage the student to speak to Beds SU Advice Service directly rather than them using an advocate. This is because advocates are not always in possession of all the relevant facts needed to enable us to advise correctly. If an advocate is involved, we are not able to proceed with any casework without the consent from the student is given.
- 4.10. We rely on the accuracy and reliability of information given to us by students and expect them to be honest with us.
- 4.11. We do not advise outside our field of competence and will signpost students when we deem it appropriate. There is no obligation on the part of the student to accept that referral.
- 4.12. We do not campaign on behalf of a student. We may however identify issues and trends on which campaigns could be made. If this is the case, we will advise the relevant Executive Officers and Beds SU staff who may take up campaigns if they deem it appropriate.

5. Notice of Behaviour

- 5.1. Beds SU Advice Service will not tolerate abusive or intimidating behaviour, whether verbal, written or physical. We reserve the right to withdraw our service if this occurs. Where necessary this information may be shared with Beds SU staff, the University and any other relevant agencies.
- 5.2. Beds SU will not knowingly misrepresent a student circumstances or knowingly pass on false information. If information given by students is found to be false, we may consider withdrawing the service. Similarly, we reserve the right to withdraw services from students who decide on courses of action that involve deceit or illegalities.

6. Complaints Procedure

- 6.1. If any student has a complaint about the services provided by Beds SU Advice Service, they should follow the complaints procedure outlined in the Beds SU Complaints Procedure: found at www.bedssu.co.uk

7. Student Feedback

- 7.1. Bed SU Advice Service welcomes any feedback on the services we provide. Students will be asked to complete a Student Feedback Form at the point of case closure.