

Counselling Service Birkbeck, University of London

Cancellation and Unattended Appointments Policy and Procedures

Rationale

When a person decides they want counselling, in order for the process to be effective, it is important that students attend their appointments regularly. Due to the high demand for the service, the Birkbeck Counselling Service adheres to the following policy on cancellations and unattended appointments in order that the service is equally accessible to all students requesting to use the service.

We appreciate that sometimes things happen and you just can't make the appointment. It is important in such instances that you inform us 48 hours in advance. If you are unable to call in advance please let the service know as soon as possible. Unfortunately due to the high demand for the service cancellations and missed sessions do count as one of your allocated number of sessions unless it is for the purpose of an exam or medical appointment.

Initial Consultations

Students wishing to access the service are invited for an appointment to explore their needs and suitability for short term counselling. They are asked to confirm their attendance within 48 hours of being offered an appointment via their Birkbeck email account. If they do not confirm within that timeframe then the appointment may be allocated to another student. If the student makes contact declining the appointment then a further appointment may be allocated. If we do not hear from the student within 5 working days having offered an appointment, the service will assume the student no longer wants to access the service and their case will be closed. This does not preclude students from coming back to us at a later stage if they require a service however they will need to reapply.

Missed Initial Consultations

In the event of an unattended initial appointment following confirmation the student will receive the standard email from the counsellor and unless the student makes contact with the service we will assume they no longer wish to attend counselling and they will be removed from the waiting list. This will not preclude them from accessing the service in the future.

In the event of a cancellation of an initial appointment 48 hours in advance or a client contacting the service following a missed initial appointment requesting another appointment then another assessment will be allocated. Other students awaiting an initial appointment may however take priority and this therefore may take more time before a space becomes available.

In the case of two missed initial consultations, the counsellor will contact the student and a telephone conversation will need to take place regarding the student's difficulty in attending before another appointment is offered. Numerous missed initial appointments further assessments may be refused until the client is able to commit to attending. This will be at the discretion of the Counselling Service Manager depending on the student's situation, the amount of missed appointments and the current demand for the service.

Late Initial Appointments

The initial consultation is important and it takes time to gain an understanding of the issues, assess the situation and agree on a way forwards. If the student arrives later than 10 minutes late for the appointment the session may need to be rescheduled in order to ensure there is enough time to carry out the work.

Ongoing Appointments

Students are asked to commit to a day and time for up to a maximum of sessions, the amount will be agreed with the counsellor at the initial consultation. Students are asked to give 48 hours' notice for cancellations of sessions.

Appointments cancelled in advance for the following reasons won't be counted within the total agreed number:

- Exams
- Field trips
- Hospital appointments
- Hospitalisation
- Cancellation by a practitioner
- Extenuating circumstances (at the discretion of the practitioner)

Appointments cancelled or missed for the following reasons will be counted within the client's total agreed number:

- Illness
- Lectures/tutorials
- Leave outside of University vacation times
- Conflicting appointments

Failure to attend any two appointments without 48 hours prior notification will result in the termination of further sessions within that episode of counselling.

Unfortunately sessions cannot be rescheduled for other reasons due to high demand for the service.

If a session is missed with no contact the counsellor will email the student offering the same appointment next week and requesting confirmation within 48 hours. If no confirmation is received the counsellor at their discretion may use this space for another student and terminate the counselling contract.

Two missed appointments may lead to us not being able to offer more counselling appointments at this time.

If the student is late for the counselling session we ask that students contact the counselling service to forewarn of this. In the event where this is not possible, the counsellor is required to keep the appointment open for the remainder of the session and to end on time regardless of the time of arrival.