**THE ADVICE CENTRE CODE OF PRACTICE**

The Advice Centre offers free, confidential, independent and impartial advice to students at Imperial college on a range of issues.

The aim is to empower and support students to solve their problems and give them the confidence and ability to help themselves. This is done by giving student options on solutions to issues and allowing them to make their own empowered choices on the best way forward.

A client of the Advice Centre can expect to be:

* Advised confidentially on their case. Third parties will only be contacted with the expressed consent of the student
* Given accurate, honest and impartial advice at all times
* Hear back from the Adviser within 2 working days. This might vary during particularly busy times and information will be provided.
* Treated with respect and made to feel at ease at all times no matter what the enquiry or issue.
* Seen on time for a pre arranged appointment
* Referred to more specialist organisations if this would benefit the student
* Kept updated on the developments in their case as soon as possible

The advice centre expects a client to:

* Give a full and honest explanation of their situation to the Adviser
* Arrive on time to a pre arranged appointment
* Treat the union adviser and reception staff with respect (in conjunction with Imperial College Union’s Equal Opportunities Policy)
* Bring any documentation related to the enquiry to any appointment
* Keep us updated on any development in their case
* Inform the Adviser if other agencies are being consulted in parallel to an enquiry at the Advice Centre.

**Equal opportunities**

The advice centre is committed to Equal Opportunities and its staff are bound by the Imperial College Union Equal Opportunities Policy. The Advice Centre endeavours to promote this policy to its clients and also to seek out areas where this is not the case. The Advice Centre aims to create an environment whereby students, staff, members and visitors are treated fairly and equally.

**Feedback and Complaints**

Clients of the Advice Centre will all be sent a feedback form which can be completed anonymously. All feedback received will be used to develop and improve the service.

Complaints about the service should be directed to Union President and the Union Complaints procedure will be followed.

**Right to access information**

By engaging with the service you agree for us to keep a record of your case on our case management system. This is a confidential system and only members of the advice service have access to this. From time to time the IT team will need to access the system for maintenance reasons but they will not be accessing individual records.

If you don’t want us to keep a record just inform your adviser. However this could affect the progress of your case as we won’t have a record of what has happened.

You have the right to request a copy of your file. You can email advice@imperial.ac.uk with this request and it can take up to 2 weeks to receive a copy.

**Using the service**

The Advice Centre is open:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10:00 to 16:00

Wednesday 13:00 to 16:00

A client can access the service by:

* Email: advice@imperial.ac.uk
* Telephone
* Face to face appointment

If you **email** the advice centre you should hear back within 2 working days. During particularly busy times it might take longer to respond to emails. If the response time is extended this will be advertised on the Advice website.

The centre is closed during weekends and bank holidays. Clients should not expect a response during this time.

**Phone calls** are taken by the union reception who will put the call through to the adviser. If the adviser is unable to take a call the Receptionist will take the client’s contact details and pass them to the Adviser. The Adviser will then get in touch as soon as possible.

If you would like to book an **appointment** you should email the service at advice@imperial.ac.uk

When attending an appointment the client will be directed to the Union reception. The receptionist will then contact the Adviser to let them know that a student is there to see them.

**All appointments will then take place in a confidential space and will last 30 minutes.**

The advice centre does not currently run a drop in session and if you come to the Union wishing to speak to an adviser this might not always be possible.

If an adviser is not available the receptionist will take your contact details and pass them on to the adviser.

An Adviser will get in touch as soon as possible to arrange an appointment.

Occasionally the Centre will need to close for staff training and holiday periods. This information will be advertised on the website and on the automated response.

 **Conflict of interest**

If two or more students are involved in the same case, an Adviser cannot assist all parties. Advice will be provided on a first come first served basis. The other students involved will be informed that they will not be able to receive advice because of a potential conflict of interest.

This might cause the Adviser to involuntarily disclose the fact that a certain student has contacted the service (without naming them). The Adviser will try to minimise this risk wherever possible.

All students will be provided with basic information about procedures and regulations but not all students will be supported by the Centre.

(See conflict of interest policy for more details)

**Restriction to service**

The Advice Centre aims to help all students who approach the centre and provide the support necessary for each case. There is normally no restriction to contact time or method of contact. However from time to time, it might be necessary to restrict the service provided.

This could be because:

* This is limiting the support other students can access
* The level of support required by a student is disempowering them
* The student is consistently late for appointments or does not attend without giving notice
* The level or nature of assistance required is outside of the remit of the service
* A conflict of interest is identified
* The service user is not a student at Imperial college London

Students will always be fully informed of the reason and terms of any restrictions placed upon their use of the Advice Centre.

**Withdrawal of Service**

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to withdraw a student’s access to the centre. This might be because:

* the student fails to comply with the terms of a restriction to service.
* the student is being aggressive or discriminatory toward a member of staff of the Advice Centre or the Union reception
* The student is considered to pose a threat to the safety of staff or other students

If it becomes apparent that withdrawal of the service is necessary this will be discussed within the Advice team and written consent will be given by the Head of

The student concerned will be notified in writing and they will be directed to the Complaints procedure where they can address any concerns they might have.