

Confidentiality Policy

Ulster University Students' Union Advice Bureau is committed to providing a confidential service to its clients. The Membership Director of UUSU has ultimate oversight and ownership of the Advice Bureau, which falls under their directorate.

This policy will be reviewed by UUSU annually. Copies can be downloaded [here](#) or are available on request by emailing Avril Honan, Membership Director: a.honan@ulster.ac.uk. Advice Bureau staff will be responsible for ensuring the current policy is displayed online and available internally.

Conduct of the Advice Process

Advice Bureau employees will not confirm a client's attendance to the service without their expressed consent to do so.

Clients will be offered a confidential interview space to undertake official Advice Bureau meetings.

Advice Bureau staff may on occasion be required to discuss cases within their team and also need the input and opinion of other members of staff within UUSU. There may also be instances where conversations with UU staff are necessary. Where this is the case there must be an explicit rationale as to how this will advance the case and only information pertaining to influencing the outcome of the case is shared.

All statistical recording shall be anonymous.

Case files including case notes, copies of correspondence and calculation sheets will be held in lockable cupboards within locked offices or password protected computer drives. All case notes will be stored within Advice Pro a case recording software programme. Your data is securely stored in the UK within a robust, secure operations centre compliant with Information Security Code of Practice ISO27001, and automatically backed up daily.

Documentation will be kept in a secure archive for a maximum of six years¹ after which time it will be destroyed using appropriate confidential waste procedures in line with Data Protection legislation.

Staff will clarify with clients their preferences in terms of contact and will record on the case file where clients have indicated that certain forms of contact are insecure or unacceptable to them.

When leaving voice messages for client's staff will not identify themselves as working for an advice service and reveal any details of a case content.

Where clients request that no contact be made with certain parties this will be recorded and adhered to.

Breaching Confidentiality

Where it becomes apparent that the client is committing or has committed crime the adviser will warn the client of the implications of their actions, bring the interview to an end and refuse to give further advice on this matter. If such a situation arises, it must be treated with utmost seriousness and consultation with a UUSU Senior Manager will be sought at the earliest opportunity.

¹ The period of 6 years has been arrived at to cover the possible span of the student lifecycle – students may attend for a foundation year, plus an undergraduate course of 3 years and perhaps carry on to a Masters degree or have a period of absence. Student complaints may also be made by recent graduates (a year after graduating), therefore six years is a reasonable time to retain information for students to cover recurring visits.

The Advice Bureau understands confidentiality to mean that no information regarding a client shall be given directly or indirectly to a third party without the client's expressed consent except in the following cases:

1. Conflict of Interest: namely, where the Advice Bureau identifies a potential conflict of interest which necessitates informing one party that we can no longer act on their behalf this may draw attention to the fact that we are already acting on behalf of another party. In these circumstances the compromised party will be informed of the breach and no further action will be disclosed.
2. Where required to by Act of Parliament.
3. Where required to by order of a Court of Law.
4. Where an adviser believes there to be a substantial threat to life, either of the client or another person.

Where an adviser believes that there may be a need to breach confidentiality deliberately they should inform the client of this course of action then raise the matter with the Membership Director. In their absence, the matter should be raised with the Chief Executive Officer.

The Membership Director will explore the issues with the adviser and decide on whether confidentiality should be breached. A written record of the discussion and decision will be placed on the case file.

Where the decision is to breach confidentiality, a full briefing will be referred to UUSU President who will seek support in their decision from the Chief Executive Officer. Where the Chief Executive Officer has been involved in the earlier decision they will see advice from an External Trustee. The elected officer's decision will be final, and a full written report will be added to the case file.

Awareness of Policy

All members of staff at UUSU Advice Bureau will be made aware of this policy through their induction and training.

All UUSU employees and Executive Officers who may encounter confidential information will be required to sign a copy of the policy. This policy will be displayed in all UUSU Advice Bureau staff offices and on the Students' Union website.