

Counseling Policy

Policy Owner	Office of Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs	Responsible Office	Counseling Unit
Approved By	Chancellor	Effective Date	Oct. 2021
		Next Review Date	Oct. 2024

Purpose

The University recognizes the importance of counseling service, and the need for healthy and safe study environment that will contribute to the well-being and productivity of faculty, staff and students. The main purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline the University's commitment to provide counseling to the Ajman University Community.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable regulations.
- Manage mental and social health of the faculty/staff members and students.

Definitions

Anxiety: Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. It is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

Depression: It is a mood disorder that results in impairments to functioning. It may appear as a single, long-lasting negative mood or as episodic symptoms that interfere with the ability to work.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD): ADD is poor sustained attention to tasks, poor organizational skills and impaired impulse control and delay of gratification.

University: Ajman University.

Scope

This policy applies to AU faculty, staff and students.

Policy

1. All faculty/staff members and students at AU have access to the social and psychological benefits associated with mental health issues provided by the Counseling Unit.
2. Counseling Unit (CU) works with faculty/staff members and students struggling with a variety of personal issues. Ensuing are some of the common concerns:
 - A. Student's Issues:
 - Adjustment to college life
 - Academic challenges
 - Issues of past, recent, or present physical, emotional problems
 - Emotional distress (anxiety, stress, grief, depression)

- Low self-esteem - feelings of inadequacy
- Relationship issues (marital, friends, roommates)
- Past or recent losses or trauma
- Spiritual challenges
- Body image, eating, and nutritional concerns
- Crisis situations when life gets overwhelming (including feeling suicidal and all other mental-health emergencies)
- And many other unique issues specific to each person.

B. Faculty/Staff Members' Issues:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

C. Any effective system for administering counseling mental health benefits must accommodate a wide variety of individual circumstances. More frequently than not, these accommodations conflict with each other, so a single procedure to be followed by each individual is not likely to satisfy all others. Therefore, the system that has evolved is designed to provide options meeting as many needs as could be anticipated at the time this document was prepared.

- If it becomes clear in the counseling session that there is a real danger to oneself or to others, we are required to take action.
- Additional records of sessions are sometimes taken such as the counselor's personal notes and audio tapes. These are destroyed in a timely manner and do not become part of an individual's counseling record.
- Each individual is entitled to privacy in his/her work with a counselor.
- All contacts with the counselor are confidential to the Counseling Unit professional staff.
- Written permission is required for Counseling Services to release information to others outside the Counseling Services.
- For some serious cases, the information should be shared with office of medical services for a clinical medical care, referral and follow up to assure the safety of the patient and the community.
- All diagnosed cases should be documented at the OMS with a full confidentiality.

Individuals who fail to attend counseling service sessions

- Counselor will attempt to contact subject person through secure messaging to schedule another appointment suitable for both counselor and the concerned person:
 - Contact will include a reminder of the failure to attend session.

- b. If the counselor does not hear from the subject person within two weeks of the initial no-show, the counselor will render the counseling file inactive.
- c. If the subject person does not schedule within 30 days, the his/her file will remain inactivated and he/she may have to complete the initial intake process if the service is requested at a later date.
- d. Additionally, if a subject person is chronically late in canceling his /her appointments, the person may become ineligible for services. If a person does not notify the Counseling Office with at least 24 hours' notice on two consecutive occasions, the person's next appointment will be at least 30 days from the last cancellation.

Guidelines for Housing/Counseling Considerations (Students)

- These guidelines will be used when reviewing the Student Housing counseling request.
 - a. The process of verifying and reviewing a Counseling Request can take one week or more before a decision is made and the student is informed of the decision.
 - b. The student is strongly encouraged to sign a Release Form with his/her Medical/Mental Health Professional. This will allow the University Housing to verify the submitted information.
 - c. The undertaking can be part of the mandatory medical checkup already performed by all students when joining AU.
 - d. If the student is currently seeing a Medical/Mental Health Professional, the student will need to provide documentation from the Medical/Mental Health Professional, on the professional's stationary, detailing:
 - i. Length of time the student has been seen/under treatment by the Medical/Mental Health Professional.
 - ii. Treating Medical/Mental Health Professional's contact information.
 - iii. Psychological disorder.
- If the student is not currently seeing a Medical/Mental Health Professional, the student will need to do the following:
 - a. Make an appointment with a Medical/Mental Health Professional.
 - b. Be seen or under treatment for a minimum of four visits (more visits may be necessary if clinically required) with the Medical/Mental Health Professional.
 - c. Provide documentation from the Medical/Mental Health Professional, on professional's stationery detailing:
 - i. Length of time the student has been seen/under treatment by the Medical/Mental Health Professional.
 - ii. Treating Medical/Mental Health Professional's contact information.
 - iii. Psychological disorder.
 - d. At AU student Counseling Unit, the student's issue must be clinically significant and be directly related to the Student Housing situation. Merely having a psychological disorder does not indicate that the Medical/Mental Health Professional will recommend that a Housing contract be cancelled. Each request will be reviewed by the entire clinical team before a

recommendation can be made. Ultimately, the final decision will be made by University Student Housing.

- e. All mental/ psychological cases should be reported to OMS to be documented with the student/ staff medical file with full confidentiality.

Release of Information Policy

- All communication between a faculty/staff member or student and a counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist is confidential and will not, except under the circumstances explained below, be disclosed to anyone outside of the Counseling Services and the OMS unless written authorization to release information is given.
- Sharing information with OMS will help the medical services team in dealing with each case based on the clinical and psychological findings.

A Release of Information Form will need to be signed to have a Counseling Services professional staff communicate the information to any concerned party.

A record is kept of a student's or employees' work with the Counseling Services. It contains information a student or employee has provided to the Counseling Services in writing as well as counseling notes from the regular sessions. The record remains in the Counseling Services for a period of three years following the subject person last visit; at that time, it is destroyed.

- Most limits to confidentiality are to ensure safety. If there is evidence of imminent danger of harm to the student/employee or other(s), the Counseling Unit will take action.
- Counseling information cannot be released to the following without the client's consent:
 - a. Parents or guardians, spouse, siblings, or significant other;
 - b. Another doctor, lawyer, or health organization;
 - c. Insurance company.

Procedure

1. A faculty/staff member or a student may review his/her counseling record in the confines of the Counseling Services office with a counselor and only by appointment.
2. A faculty/staff member or a student wishing to grant release of information to another party must complete the Release of Information form.

Document History

Version	Date	Update Information	Author/ Reviewer
V 1.0	24/10/2010	Initial Policy	Council Service Director
V 1.1	20/09/2012	Minor change in policy authority	Director of Student Affairs
V 1.2	09/05/2017	Minor change	Counseling Manager
V 1.3	18/03/2021	Reviewed and no changes required	Manager of Counseling Unit
V 1.4	13/10/2021	-The policy is formerly titled Student Counseling Policy. -The policy has been revised to accommodate faculty and staff in the counseling services at AU. -Collaboration between the CU and OMS in providing counseling services has been added.	Manager of Counseling Unit Manager of Medical Services