**UWLSU Advice Office Manual**

**2025**

**Reviewed:** December 2024

**Date of next review:** December 2025

**Service Standards Statement**

**Independent | Non-judgemental | Confidential | Empowering**

**Principles of service**

UWLSU Advice provides a free, non-judgemental and confidential service to students of The University of West London Students’ Union. We are committed to providing the best possible service and will work in partnership with University of West London departments and external agencies as and when necessary, to achieve the best outcomes for our students.

In accordance with charity legislation and the 1994 Education Act, UWLSU Advice is aims to deliver an impartial and confidential service which empowers students to make informed decisions. This may include students studying at academic partners of UWL, such as validated partners. In exceptional circumstances, the Advice service can support students in partner institutions if this is reflected in the contractual agreements between the partner and UWL.

Ours is a self-help service, advising students through UWL academic procedures such as mitigating circumstances, appeals, disciplinary, academic offences, complaints, fitness to study and fitness to practice. We will endeavour to provide advice and information about these processes to students using our service, and we will inform students that they are ultimately responsible for their case.

Where a student informs us that they have access requirements, every effort will be made to accommodate reasonable adjustments that will help them access our service and further their case. In these instances, the Advisor will discuss with the student any appropriate actions they can take to support them on a case-by-case basis. This can include but not limited to providing accessible appointments; writing forms on their behalf; and presenting information in clearer or larger fonts.

In addition to telephone and email advise, we operate and advertise a drop-in service at UWL’s St Mary’s Road and Paragon campuses to ensure that students can access us when they need us. We also operate a proactive advice project called UWLSU Advice on Tour, which delivers low level advice, information on regulations and signposting information to students. Students can request an appointment with an advisor by emailing uwl.su@uwl.ac.uk and completing a client registration form.

**What students can expect from us**

We will always be respectful, professional and communicative.

We will ensure that you have an advisor allocated to you and in most cases, this advisor will remain constant. Where this is not possible, you will be notified of this and a new advisor will be briefed on your case.

We will aim to ensure that students wait no longer than 3 working days to see an advisor. Where there are times of the year that the Advice service becomes busier, or where there are absences in the team, all students booking appointments will be notified of either and informed of the expected appointment times. The new expected time will be determined by the Advice Manager, and if not available, the Head of Membership or CEO of UWLSU.

We will attempt to accommodate students at any of our campuses whenever possible. Where this is not possible we will provide advice via email, virtual call or telephone.

We will signpost/refer students to an agency that may be able to offer assistance when we are unable to provide information or advice.

We will adhere to confidentiality unless we are required to do so by law or where we believe a risk of harm is present to the student or somebody else (safeguarding concern). Students can access our Confidentiality Policy at [www.uwlsu.com](http://www.uwlsu.com)

**What we expect from students**

To be respectful, professional and communicative at all times to all members of staff in the Students’ Union including student staff.

To provide accurate and honest information about your case to the best of your ability; and to not omit information that may support your case.

To be autonomous with your case, take ownership of its progression, and to undertake (or consider) actions we recommend.

To keep the allocated advisor up to date with your case, contact details and any requested information.

To allow time for advisors to respond to cases without harassment or repeated contact

**Failure to adhere to these expectations will result in students being referred to the Advice Service’s Withdrawal of Service Policy**

**Referral & Signposting Policy**

UWLSU recognises that students may need help and advice from another source if staff members within the Advice Service do not have the necessary skills and/or knowledge to assist. It is therefore of primary importance that students are signposted or referred to a suitable agency or department only after having established that they are the appropriate place to deal with the student’s problem.

**Signposting**

Signposting is intended to provide students with the opportunity to access additional support to supplement the advice provided by UWLSU Advice. If appropriate, the advisor will provide contact details of the alternative support that exists. Examples of instances where signposting may be appropriate include:

* GP’s and external health services
* UWL Counselling, Welfare and Wellbeing service
* UWL Academic Staff
* UWL Student Advice (includes Immigration advice)
* UWL Accommodation or Housing advice
* UWL Finance

Signposting does not require a form and information may be given to students verbally in person or over the phone**,** however on most occasions staff members will be expected to email signposting information to students.

Records of signposting will be kept up to date in the student’s case notes and a central record shall be kept and reviewed at the end of each semester.

**Referrals to other organisations**

A student may be referred to another department or organisation when:

* It is clear that another organisation or department would provide a more appropriate level of expertise to advise the student on their needs
* UWLSU is not permitted to advise the student on the issue by law
* A conflict of interest has arisen
* Resources limit the level of service we are able to offer
* There is an urgent support or access requirement meaning that a referral is expedient.

All referrals must be authorised and given consent by the student by completing the referral form via telephone, email or in person with a signed and updated C form.

If the student no longer has an academic issue, the case with the advisor will be closed. The student will be informed that the case has been closed in accordance to UWL case closure policy.

If a student is unwilling to be referred, the staff member should discuss other options and the support that UWLSU Advice is able to give to the student. The staff member should clearly state the limitation of the support that can be offered so that the student’s expectations are not raised beyond the expertise of the service.

Issues to be referred may include:

* Severe financial hardship
* Threatened eviction
* Criminal law issues
* Family law including divorce
* DWP benefit tribunal cases
* Immigration advice
* Deteriorating Mental health

When referring a student, the staff member should:

* Ensure the organisation is on the list of approved organisations or is signed off by the Advice Manager
* Ensure the student understands the reason for the referral, and the possible outcomes
* Provide the student with detailed information about the organisation or department they are to be referred to and they will know what service to expect from them
* Obtain written authorisation from the student and complete the Referral form and make copies of relevant documents
* Refer the relevant details of the case to the specialist
* Explain any cost implications of the referral to the student (where known)
* Inform the student that they may be eligible for funding under legal aid where relevant
* Explain to the student that they will need to arrange an appointment with the new organisation or department
* Ensure the student understands that the UWLSU Advice Service will not continue to give advice on any issues triggering the referral.

A central record of referrals should be kept to identify effective referrals and issues where it has been difficult to find appropriate referral organisations, and to be used in service reviews. If no suitable organization or department is found, a note should be made in the student’s records.

**Referrals concerning a student with a safeguarding issue or risk of harm concern**

If the referral is more urgent due to a safeguarding or risk of harm issue an advisor should undertake the following actions with a student:

* Follow The University of West London’s ‘Cause for Concern’ policy and follow safeguarding approaches
* Inform the student that they are breaking confidentiality in the interest of safety of the student, or of other students/persons.
* Contact one of UWLSU’s Safeguarding Leads, or UWL’s Welfare team to advise and guide on the case.
* Record the risk on AdvicePro with details of what was specifically said and done that led the advisor to consider this as safeguarding or risk of harm.

**UWLSU Advice Case Management and Allocation Policy**

**Recording a New Case**

Upon accessing the Advice service, students will be required to complete a Client Registration Form that includes contact details, basic information of academic studies, nature of case and any other relevant information. This form can be given to them by any staff member, but usually is by SU Central team.

Once completed, this form is uploaded to Advice Pro and the student is recorded on a central management system to be allocated to an Advisor.

The following information is considered essential to a case record: Name; Student number; Course and Level; Access requirements; Contact details; any signposting requirements; Consent.

**Case Recording**

Case files are required for the following reasons to ensure that UWLSU Advice has a record of advice that has been given to the student and can be used in the progression of the case. UWLSU uses Advice Pro, a recommend case management system. Other reasons that case files are used:

* Accurate records are required in case of a claim against professional indemnity insurance
* To clarify disputes or previous information provided
* For advisors and students to remember case information
* To provide details when cases are escalated or moved to another advisor

Case records should include:

* Student’s contact details
* Advice details, topics and circumstances
* Advice given and information noted by advisors and students
* Dates, times and actions
* Any letters or documents to compliment the case such as initial registration forms, consent forms
* Any signposting information given to the student

**Case Allocation**

Once the students’ information has been triaged effectively and information understood, students that require support from the Advice service will be allocated an Advisor.

* Where possible, the student should be taken through an initial triage assessment with a triage advisor on duty (usually the Customer Services Coordinator). [currently a paused process but can be reignited]
* Where triage is not possible due to staff availability or other constraints, the student should be put straight into a drop-in.
* New cases will be allocated to an Advisor depending on who is available when a student makes first contact. Advisors are expected to deal with any cases that are presented to them, and are encouraged to allocate suitable cases between them based on their own availability.
* If an Advisor feels there is a possible conflict of interest, the Advisor must then discuss the case with the Advice Manager, who will decide what action is appropriate.
* All Advisors are encouraged to discuss cases amongst themselves as when advisors feel necessary. This is to encourage wider learning by all staff and to ensure that different angles to a problem can be explored.
* Case allocation may require initial communication to understand the students’ availability. Confirmation of first appointments must be communicated with the student.

**Advice Appointments**

Following confirmation of appointment and Advisor, an Advisor will endeavour to meet, call or communicate with the student about their circumstance.

The Advisor may use an Appointment Record Form ( B form) to make notes during appointments. Appointment records should be uploaded onto the student case file after each appointment and paper copies destroyed after uploading.

Advice appointments are scheduled for 20 minutes. Where necessary, advice appointments can last longer if deemed severe or complex, subject to the Advice services’ availability.

Cases should be created on the Advice Pro system within 24 hours of an appointment.

**Recording Cases on AdvicePro**

All enquiries and cases should be recorded on AdvicePro. Details of advice given should be clearly written, using bullet points if possible.

Emails should be pasted onto the case notes including date, email address and electronic documents.

Where an Advisor has emailed a student following a meeting with them, this can be included in the case notes as a record of the advice given: additional notes on the advice given do not need to be recorded.

Paper documents should be scanned and attached to the AdvicePro notes. If this is not practical due to the size of the document it should be scanned and recorded on multiple documents that are clearly referenced.

Remember to always record a case note after the following actions:

* Casework telephone call
* Casework appointment
* Casework email
* Casework letter
* Attendance at any meetings with the student and the outcome of the meeting

Advisors should only open one case for multiple issues for the same student, e.g. mitigation, complaint, appeal, disciplinary or fitness to practice.

Other issues presented should also be recorded on Advice Pro, such as bereavement, financial problems or mental health difficulties.

The student’s desired outcome of each case should also be recorded on advice pro, such as an extension, deferral or successful mitigation.

**Keeping Students informed**

Students should always be kept informed of any new developments, actions, key dates, or decisions through any of through any appropriate communication. Advisors and students may also be copied into email communications following any new developments – Advisors are expected to make notes and record relevant developments (even those that do not require responses) and students are expected to be across all communications received.

The Advisor should use the Appointment Record Form to make notes during appointments. Appointment records, should be uploaded onto the student case file after each appointment and destroyed after uploading.

Notes made by an Advisor during an appointment should be kept securely and information destroyed using the confidential waste disposal units following the appointment & deleting from our saved documents on laptop.

**Recording Tasks and Key Dates**

The purpose of recording ‘Tasks’ and ‘Key Dates’ is to ensure cases are live and being dealt with appropriately. Advisors may use these functions on Advice pro to record actions to be taken as part of the case management and to enable effective support for the case. This includes (but is not limited to):

‘Key Dates’ and ‘Tasks’ can be used for at least the following:

* Casework deadlines, e.g. for an appeal, when a form needs to be submitted;
* Appointments or meeting dates and deadlines to submit any documentation or evidence
* Check-in dates with students
* Dates to be added for advisors to check in with students.
* FTP, AOI and course meeting dates to be added to key dates.

In accordance with the AQS requirements all case files should have at least one key date before closing a case file.

**Case File Management**

* A student’s file, whether active or closed, will be kept in the electronic case record system, and can be re-opened if necessary. It is hosted by AdvicePro on secure servers and is protected by password.
* In the event that an Advisor needs to take case records out of the Students’ Union (for example making paper copies of files for a hearing), the Advisor will ensure the safekeeping of the records and dispose of them securely on their return using the confidential waste disposal units. Advisors will not take case documentation outside or UWLSU premises
* At the beginning of each new academic year, all closed electronic case records which are over six years old will be deleted from Advice Pro by the Advice Manager in line with the requirements of GDPR.
* Termly reviews of the central record of file reviews will be conducted by the Advice Manager where required. External reviews of case files (such as AQS) may be conducted to obtain accreditations for quality. Students must consent to case files being accessible to any external organisations through the client registration form.

**Recording Outcomes**

Ideally an outcome will be recorded for each case, but it is understood that many students do not respond to requests for details on the outcome of their case. If this is the case, these cases should be recorded as ‘no contact’.

There is two outcomes which should be listed on each case file

1.Case successful/Case unsuccessful – indicates if the case has been managed appropriately according to the advice service manual.

2. Outcome related to case – such as “ Mitigation accepted/ Complaint upheld/student allowed to continue” etc.

Before closing a case, if the outcome is unknown, the Advisor should email a student prior to closing a case and enquire about any outcome.

Outcomes should be recorded using the ‘outcome’ tab on AdvicePro.

If the UWLSU Advisor is notified of the outcome of a student’s case independently of the student for any reason, they should inform the student immediately in writing and explain to the body giving the information that they will be doing so.

If the UWLSU Advisor is notified of the outcome of a student’s case at the same time as a student or by the student, they should follow the case closure process below.

**Closing a case/enquiry**

Cases and enquiries become inactive after 10 working days of inactivity. Inactive cases should not be left open and therefore need Advisor action.

The Advisor will set a task to review a case or make contact if waiting for action from the student or another agency within 5 working days the case is then to be closed by 10 working days ( 2 weeks)

A case should be closed in the following circumstances:

* The issue has been concluded and the student has been informed
* The student has not responded to an email asking for an update, following attempts by the Advisor to re-engage the student
* The student has been referred to another agency and no further action is required from our service
* The student does not require casework from the Advisor after an initial appointment
* The student issue does not relate to a process with UWLSU can assist with
* The student has exhausted the Case Escalation process.

**Conclusion of Cases**

The procedure for closing a case in the event of an outcome being known is as follows:

* If the UWLSU Advisor is notified of the outcome of a student’s case independently of the student, they should inform the student within 48 hours in writing and explain to the body giving the information that they will be doing so.
* The student should be contacted within 5 working days following notification of the outcome to see if they would like further support, and informed that their file will be closed immediately unless they require further support.

**Inactivity in cases**

If a case is not progressing as planned because the student has not provided information, the Advisor will communicate with the student in the following process:

* The advisor will attempt to call the student twice, followed by an email asking to discuss the case or progression of the case
* After appproximately 10 working days, the advisor will inform the student that without information the case cannot progress, and therefore the advice service will look to close this case if they do not receive information after another 5 working days
* After another 5 working days of inactivity (15 in total), the advisor will contact the student to let them know the case is closed.
  + Should the student respond after this period, the Advisor will reasonably determine whether the student can continue to access support
  + The Advisor will not consider resuming support if the student has not either sent necessary information requested, or provided reasonable explanation as to why they haven’t been able to provide information.
* If a student is awaiting a panel date such as an FTP and therefore the inactivity is not due to the student, the case can be classed as inactive until the student updates the advisor of any changes to the case.

In cases that cannot progress due to staff absences/illness the following options are available, the current Advisor re-allocates to another Advisor in the service. Where communication isn’t possible, the Advice Manager re-allocates appropriately.

**Case Escalation Process**

Where relevant, the Advice service may consider escalating cases to more senior, experienced or technically skilled staff within the service based on the following circumstances:

* The case becomes complex and involves many stakeholders
* The case presents more institutional or reputational risk
* The student has complex needs, experiences or requires specialist support
* The case has safeguarding or risk of harm aspects
* The student has demonstrated abusive, disrespectful or threatening tendencies
* If the original advisor is still training.

**Students dissatisfied with allocated advisor**

Where a student expresses dissatisfaction with the support made by a staff member in the advice team, the following escalation may take place:

* + Students dissatisfied with an Advisor will be referred to an ASM to review the case. If the advisor has been compliant then the ASM to explain to the student that everything looks compliant and to try an encourage continuation with the advisor.
  + Students dissatisfied with an Advisor or Senior Advisor will be referred to the Advice Manager.
  + Students dissatisfied with the Advice Manager will be referred to the Head of Membership

If a student is dissatisfied with the support from the Head of Membership, they will be advised that they cannot be referred again as this is the most senior member of staff with Advice training. At this point the student will be advised that they cannot continue to access support or ask for further referral. The student will be signposted to other UWL and UWLSU services and process, including the complaints processes.

If a student has been escalated, they cannot request support by the previous staff member allocated. The relevant members of staff in the advice service will be notified of escalations

**Appointments Policy**

**UWLSU Advice Drop-in Service**

UWLSU Advice seeks to advise all students who require their assistance in a timely manner. To achieve this they must ensure adequate time is scheduled for each student. This allows UWLSU Advice to give each case the attention it requires.

UWLSU Advice primarily operates and advertises itself as a Drop-In Service, meaning that we do not normally schedule appointments with students. Students are encouraged to attend a drop-in and ‘check-in’ at our Reception in order to be placed in a queue or be placed in a queue for a callback if contacting us for an immediate appointment via telephone.

The drop-in schedule does not normally run before 11am or after 4pm to allow for adequate case follow-up as well as to accommodate any emergency and accessible appointments.

The queuing system is coordinated by the SU Central Team and allows for cases to be assigned to advisors who may have knowledge on topics involved, or previous history with the case.

* Drop-in appointments can be offered via phone, in-person or virtually on zoom, microsoft teams or skype.
* The drop-in schedule should be managed by the SU Central staff at the St Mary’s Road Campus (see the UWLSU Advice Case Allocation Policy and procedures).
* Drop-in appointments should be scheduled in 20 minute slots with at least 15 minutes in-between to allow Advisors adequate time to write up case notes and follow up/summary emails to the student. This should include any instructions the student must follow before any future contact or key dates and any actions agreed by all parties.
* Appointments for students with a scheduled Fitness to Practice Hearing may be allocated up to 1 hour slots if needed due to the often complex nature of these cases and work required.
* Students will receive confirmation of their place in the queue at the Front of House desk. UWLSU Front of House Staff should collect the telephone number of the student, for use in case of a change of availability of an Advisor.
* All relevant information that is required on the client registration form should be collected at the check-in stage and put directly into advice pro.

**Emergency appointments**

Where a student has contacted us in distress or expressed a clear and immediate need to speak to an advisor outside of our normal drop-in schedule, and when an Advisor is available, an emergency appointment of up to 1 hour may be scheduled. This is to be at the discretion of the advisors.

**Accessible appointments**

Where a student has made UWLSU Advice aware at least 24 hours in advance that they require a pre-booked appointment to accommodate access requirements or unavoidable commitments which prevent them from attending the normal drop-in schedule, the student may be booked in for an appointment of up to 1 hour in an available Advisor’s diary.

A reminder email should be sent to the student the day before their appointment reminding them of the time and date of their appointment and which advisor they will be speaking with.

**Non-attendance at scheduled appointments**

Non-attending students will be called on the telephone number provided twice - once as the appointment starts and another time 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of their appointment. Non-attending students will be deemed a ‘No-show’ and recorded in the case notes and a central record should be kept. If a student misses 2 scheduled appointments an Advisor may refuse any further bookings.

**Ensuring privacy and accessibility in appointments**

UWLSU Advice is committed to ensuring privacy and compliance with the 2010 Equality Act in all appointments with students. All appointments should take place in the dedicated advice spaces at our St Mary’s Road and Paragon offices, or a private space allocated for the purpose of delivering advice.

In the event of two advisors working simultaneously on the same campus, provision should be made to ensure that all appointments take place in a private and compliant space. The triage area can also be used.

If UWLSU Advice undertakes an appointment at our Reading Campus (Fountain House), the Advisor responsible should ensure that a private, compliant space is booked in advance.

**When drop-in service closure might be considered**

Service closures or suspensions can be authorised by the Advice Manager or Head of Membership. This can only occur if the following takes place:

* There are absences within the advice team through sickness, annual leave or otherwise.
* A risk has been identified that undermines the safety of the service and its users
* Advisors are on training days or involved in wider UWLSU projects deemed priority
* An emergency or accessible appointment causes the running of the service to slow down at one or both sites
* A technical fault has occurred with Advice Pro.

Service closures and suspensions should be recorded on the daily drop-in sheet and recorded. Any affected students should be notified when this takes place.

**Safeguarding & Risk of harm Policy**

**Safeguarding**

Advice Service staff will comply with UWL’s “Cause for Concern Policy”, which sets the organisation-wide response to safeguarding risks. The Policy is available via the UWL website.

When an Advisor believes that Safeguarding or Risk of Harm risk has been identified, they should notify the Advice Manager or one of UWLSU’s Safeguarding Officers (Head of Membership or Chief Executive) as soon as possible. The Advisor will be supported as necessary in line with appropriate policies and procedures.

Advisors should refer to the Confidentiality Policy to ensure that confidentiality and privacy are upheld wherever possible in a student’s case.

All Advisors will be trained at a minimum in Level 1 Safeguarding, and where possible, encouraged to be trained at Level 2. Safeguarding training is delivered to Advisors and the rest of the organisation annually.

**Conflict Of Interest Policy**

This policy aims to identify conflicts of interest and give guidance on the way that these should be managed.

A conflict of interest may occur if one of the following scenarios happens

1. A student has already approached UWLSU Advice and another student who is involved in the dispute or case then approaches UWLSU Advice.

2. When a student is a friend or acquaintance of an Advisor working in UWLSU Advice.

3. Where a student has a complaint about UWLSU or is involved in a UWLSU disciplinary process.

**Action to be taken**

As soon as the Advisor is aware of a potential conflict of interest, they should disclose this to the student.

Scenario 1:

If a student has asked for advice and subsequently another student who is in dispute with the first student approaches UWLSU Advice for advice, the service reserves the right to disclose the initial contact but not the nature of the advice given to both students affected. An Advisor will not be able to represent more than one student in a dispute and every effort will be made to secure fair and equal representation for the second student.

To ensure confidentiality and impartiality no information other than contact details should be revealed when a conflict of interest referral is made between Advisors.

Wherever possible, two Advisors managing the cases where a conflict of interest is present should not be supervised by the same manager.

Scenario 2:

The Advisor should show the student the Conflict of Interest Policy and explain that it would be inappropriate for them to give advice and offer to refer them to another Advisor and take the same action as above. In the event that the student is a friend or acquaintance of multiple advisors, the Advisor initially allocated to the student should seek to refer them to another appropriate local service.

Scenario 3:

UWLSU Advice is a confidential, independent and non-judgemental service. To minimise potential conflicts of interest relating to complaints either A) or B) should be followed below:

1. If the student has a complaint about UWLSU Advice staff, the UWLSU Advice complaints procedure should be followed. The student’s case should be transferred to another Advisor not involved in the complaint should they wish to continue to access the service. The case can also be transferred to the UWLSU Advice Manager, however they should then hand investigation of the complaint over to the Head of Membership.
2. If the student has a complaint about UWLSU Advice staff and B) above is not possible (i.e. because the student does not wish to continue to accessing UWLSU Advice or if all UWLSU Advice staff are involved in substance or unsatisfactory outcome of the complaint in some way, the Advice Manager and the Head of Membership should discuss possible referral or support options with the Head of Membership.

To minimise potential conflicts of interest relating to students in UWLSU disciplinary processes either A) or B) should be followed below:

1. Provided the student’s disciplinary does not relate to their actions towards UWLSU Advice staff and that service has not been withdrawn, the student can be represented as they would in any disciplinary case involving the University. The Advisor should discuss the case with the Advice Manager and should not enter into conversations with the UWLSU staff member investigating the alleged misconduct or any member of a disciplinary panel without the student’s express consent.
2. If the student’s disciplinary relates in any way to their actions towards UWLSU Advice staff, the Advice Manager should review whether service has been withdrawn in this case. If it has, then the student is not entitled to representation and should be informed as such. If service has not been withdrawn, the Advice Manager and the Head of Membership should discuss possible referral or support options with the Head of Membership.

In all cases, the student(s) should be given a copy of the UWLSU Advice Standards Statement and assured that the UWLSU Advice policy to provide confidential, independent and impartial advice will not be compromised.

**Written Communications Policy**

Whilst valuing face-to-face contact in dealing with students, UWLSU Advice acknowledges that certain communications must be formally recorded in writing. This means anything of importance to a case and anything to which reference may be required during discussion of casework within the Advice team. These instances include, but are not limited to:

* Initial appointment follow-up
* Case notes (AdvicePro and student files)
* Signed consent forms
* Reference to specific legislation or laws
* Reference to key dates/deadlines where applicable
* The provision of evidence for Mitigating Circumstances applications, appeals and complaints

Other examples may exist and should be identified, including by updating this policy from advice team discussions.

**Key Dates Policy**

Key dates are those which are vital to be met during casework, otherwise it would be detrimental to the student.

Key dates include:

* Dates of University Appeals/Complaints/Academic Offences/Disciplinary Hearings/Mitigation Panels and/or deadlines for submission of forms and evidence relating to a student’s case to the appropriate department
* All other meeting dates applicable to a student case.

Advisors need to keep an up to date knowledge of what time limits can be imposed by various procedures. . This information will be regularly checked by the Advice Manager and discussed when appropriate in team meetings.

Advisors should have a detailed working knowledge of the following UWL policies and regulations:

* UWL Academic Regulations (in particular the exceptional circumstances, academic offences and academic appeals sections)
* UWL regulations governing Fitness to Practice
* UWL Student Complaints Policy
* UWL Student Code of Conduct
* UWL Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
* UWL Fitness to Study Policy
* UWL Student Handbook

Each of these documents contains the timeframes relevant to the processes we advise students on. Some are updated annually (such as the Academic Regulations) and it is the responsibility of the Advice Manager or Head of Membership to provide updates to the team.

It is important that all key dates and time limits are calculated correctly according to the applicable regulations. Advisors must check their calculations on any casework that might be affected by key dates.

Key dates are recorded on each student’s case record using the key dates function on AdvicePro or so that any Advice Worker can take over the case where necessary and ensure that they are aware of key dates. Key dates should also be communicated in follow-up emails to students wherever the information is available to ensure they have the information they require to progress their case within regulation timeframes.

**Selection of External Advice Providers**

When referring or signposting to an external service provider UWLSU Advice will turn first to service providers we are able to recommend. There are a number of resources and lists for these service providers including:

• The AQS directory

• National networks, such as AdviceUK.

• Local service providers with whom UWLSU Advice has an existing relationship.

* Individual services’ websites

The following question should be considered to ensure that an external advice provider is selected objectively:

1. Is the issue outside UWLSU Advice’s competence or is there an unavoidable/irreconcilable conflict of interest?

If the answer to the above is yes, then Advisors should consider the following questions:

1. Is a potential referral organisation on the approved list of providers (normally meaning accredited professionally or approved by the Advice Quality Standard)?
2. Does the organisation have relevant expertise?
3. Does the organisation have a client-centred approach?
4. How quickly can the student be seen?
5. Do we have evidence of satisfactory user experience for the service?

When signposting or referring a student only service providers the answer to one or more of questions 2-6 should be ‘yes’. **The Advice Worker must make it clear to the student if the service provider is not accredited that we cannot guarantee the quality of the advice, nor recommend the service.**

**Currently we do not refer externally however we do have confirmation that if a student is signposted or referred to an internal service such as welfare, they will be able to provide a full assessment and be able to refer to some preapproved external services. This helps to reduce any risk.**

**Equal Opportunities Policy**

UWLSU Advice adopts The University of West London’s Equal Opportunities Statement, which can be found in the Shared Management Folder in the shared drive. Students can request a copy of the statement by emailing the Advice Manager or via UWL’s website.

**Confidentiality Policy**

The protection of students’ data is covered in UWLSU’s Data Protection policy. Students can request a copy of the policy from the Advice Manager. UWLSU Advice also has a Privacy Statement which is available on our website.

UWLSU Advice is committed to providing a confidential Advice Service. All users of the service have the right to confidentiality to protect their interests. Assuring confidentiality is necessary to maintain the credibility of the service.

UWLSU Advice asks all students accessing the Advice Service to complete a Client Registration form asking for consent to: record their information, contact them, and make their file available for an AQS Quality Audit. Students’ consent is recorded on Advice Pro and the completed Client Registration form saved in the student’s file. The Client Registration form is also in Appendix one of the UWLSU Advice Manual.

**Students’ rights and consent**

Subject to what follows, no information regarding a student shall be given directly or indirectly to any third party who is not a member of UWLSU Advice staff, without that student’s express consent to the disclosure of such information. UWLSU Advice reserves the right to discuss cases, where appropriate, and with the student’s consent, with the SU VP Education. No information will be given to any external agency without the student’s express consent unless the provision of such information is required by law. Consent should normally be given in writing, but if this is not possible, then verbal consent must be obtained and recorded on the case record. All students will be made aware of what the confidentiality policy is and when it will be broken before they discuss the nature of a confidential query.

Students have the right to see the information held on them by UWLSU Advice. Students should be advised that requests must be made in writing to the Advice Manager, who should respond within three working days.

The Advice Manager may, however, decide that information should be disclosed without consent if in his/her judgement there is risk of immediate physical danger to the student or others.

**Breaching confidentiality**

***Legislation may affect student confidentiality in the following circumstances:***

* There is no duty to disclose a criminal offence under English Legislation, however the exception is under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989. It is an offence to fail to give information which may help to prevent acts of terrorism or apprehend a terrorist, and as such UWLSU Advice staff must disclose such information to the relevant authorities if it is disclosed by a student. In such a situation the Advisor must first discuss the matter with the Advice Manager, who will be responsible for reporting the matter to the police. The student must not be informed that confidentiality is being broken, as this could constitute assistance or joint liability for a crime;
* Under the Fraud Act 1997 Advisors are required not to knowingly assist in any way a fraudulent claim. As such a suspected fraudulent claim must be reported to the relevant authorities. In such a situation the Advisor must first discuss the matter with the Advice Manager, who will be responsible for reporting the matter to the police. The student must not be informed that confidentiality is being broken, as this could constitute assistance or joint liability for a crime;
* Under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Money Laundering Regulations 2003 Advisors are obliged to report any disclosure of information about a transaction that they know, suspect or ought reasonably to have known or suspected, involves money laundering. It is a criminal offence to fail to disclose this information to the relevant authorities, and it is an offence to ‘tip off’ the student. This applies if the Advisor knows or suspects that a money laundering disclosure has been made by a student, and informs a third party of this, when the provision of this information is likely to prejudice any investigation. In such a situation the Advisor must first discuss the matter with the Advice Manager, who will be responsible for reporting the matter to the police. The student must not be informed that confidentiality is being broken, as this could constitute assistance or joint liability for a crime.
* There is no duty for a student to disclose any prior criminal offences. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 ex-offenders have the right not to reveal convictions in most situations when the offence has become “spent” after a rehabilitation period without further offence.

Where UWLSU Advice staff become aware that a student is at risk of breaking the law they must inform the student that this is the case, with the exception of the areas covered by legislation above. The student will be advised to seek advice from a solicitor before disclosing further details to UWLSU Advice.

***Safeguarding responsibilities and potential risks of harm to self and others***

Confidentiality may be breached in line with our Safeguarding and Risk of Harm policy, where an Advisor believes a safeguarding risk exists or a student is at immediate risk of physical harm to themselves or others.

**Assuring Quality in the Advice Service**

UWLSU Advice recognises that information may need to be shared when UWLSU Advice staff discuss cases within the team. Staff are expected to ensure that such discussions take place in an appropriate environment – and not normally outside the offices of UWLSU Advice, except when seeking additional advice from an external advisor.

Further to the above, in order to uphold standards in the advice service and ensure consistency in quality, students’ case files are periodically reviewed in line with the Internal File Review Policy and the Supervision Policy.

UWLSU Advice is committed to the statistical recording of UWLSU Advice use to enable it to monitor the demand for the service and to identify any practical or policy issues related to the advice services. It is the responsibility of UWLSU Advice staff to ensure that all statistical records given to third parties are produced in an anonymous form, so that individuals cannot be recognised.

**Confidentiality in Advice work**

It is the responsibility of UWLSU Advice staff to ensure that all individual hard copies of case files are scanned and saved electronically and then confidentially destroyed at the end of each day, and that electronic records are held securely and appropriately protected. If for any reason paper files must be kept, and this has been approved by the Advice Manager, these must be locked securely at the end of each day. It is also Advisors’ responsibility to ensure that all computer records are held securely and appropriately protected.

If UWLSU Advice staff wish to contact or correspond with students, they are responsible for confirming that it is acceptable to call or write to them at home or work in relation to their case. All staff must ensure that

they make no reference to the purpose of the call when making telephone contact through third parties. All details of express consent must be recorded on the case file.

All UWLSU Advice staff, full-time officers and members of the Executive Committee of the Students’ Union will be introduced to the Confidentiality Policy via induction and training.

The Confidentiality Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Advice Manager.

**UWLSU Advice Privacy Statement**

**Our Commitment**

The GDPR is the first major change to data protection legislation since the Data Protection Act 1998. GDPR came in to force on 25th May 2018 and gives data subjects more control over their data. To comply with this legislative change UWLSU Advice has reviewed what data we process, how we process it and why. When we handle and store students’ personal information we follow the law. When we ask you for personal information we promise to:

* Explain why we need it
* Only ask for what we need
* Treat it as confidential

When we record and use your personal information we promise to:

* Only access it when we have a valid reason to do so
* Only share what is necessary and relevant
* Protect it and make sure nobody has access to it who shouldn’t
* Not sell it to commercial organisations

This policy explains how we seek your **consent** to **collect**, **record** and **use** your personal data; how and where we **store** it; and when we might **share** it. This, along with all of our policies, will be reviewed annually.

**Definitions**

***Data Subject (client):*** the individual that is subject of any personal data, e.g. the client accessing UWLSU Advice

***Data processor (UWLSU Advice):*** responsible for processing personal data on behalf of a controller

***Data controller (UWLSU Head of Central Services):***  determines the purposes and means of processing personal data

***Processing:*** any operation or set of operations which is performed on personal data or on sets of personal data, whether or not by automated means, such as collection, recording, organisation, structuring, storage, adaptation or alteration, retrieval, consultation, use, disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, alignment or combination, restriction, erasure or destruction.

***Personal data:*** any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.

***Consent*** of the data subject means any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject’s wishes by which he or she, by a statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to him or her.

***Special category data:*** Data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation.

Further definitions can be found here. [**https://gdpr-info.eu/art-4-gdpr/**](https://gdpr-info.eu/art-4-gdpr/%20)

**Lawful basis for processing your data**

All processing is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of data protection legislation. The lawful basis for processing your data in relation to your case is consent and our legitimate interest: 1) to allow us to identify your options in line with UWL’s and other appropriate regulatory frameworks; 2) to allow us to manage your case effectively and refer to the advice we have given you based on the information you have given us; 3) to demonstrate the advice we have given you should a dispute arise; and 4) to monitor the demographic profiles of our service users to ensure that UWLSU Advice is meeting students’ needs.

**Giving your consent**

When you contact UWLSU Advice, we keep a record of contacts made to our service through our daily drop-in database and through our secure casework management system, Advice Pro.

In some instances UWLSU Advice will require consent from clients to use their data in a certain way. UWLSU Advice has a strict Confidentiality Policy allowing for breaches of confidentiality when there is a risk of harm, a safeguarding concern, money laundering, fraud or acts of terrorism. If none of these are applicable, UWLSU Advice can only share a client’s data or contact a third party with the client’s written consent. See the UWLSU Advice Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy for more information.

UWLSU is accredited every two years by the Advice Services Alliance with the Advice Quality Standard (AQS). Consent will be sought from clients with regards to permitting an AQS auditor access to view their case/enquiry and if they permit UWLSU Advice to use their anonymised enquiry/case to showcase and promote the work we do to our key stakeholders. Consent is also required when students provide special category data on the registration form so clients are aware of why we are asking for the data.

The data you give to UWLSU Advice is in addition to the information given to us by the University for the legitimate purpose to help us meet our charitable aims. We do not link your advice case file to your student record, however we may, with your consent, tell UWL that you are using our service if you are at risk of withdrawal. We may also ask your permission to contact specific UWL staff who may help us to progress your case by providing us with relevant details from your student record. We will discuss this with you in any case.

Clients can withdraw their consent at any time by contacting UWLSU Advice directly or completing another client registration form.

**What you are agreeing to**

When you contact UWLSU Advice, you are agreeing that UWLSU Advice can set-up a case or enquiry file for you on our confidential case management system Advice Pro using the identifying information you give us.

You’re also agreeing that we can record identifying personal information such as your name, contact number and email address on our check-in database.

Refusing to give this information does not bar you from accessing our service, however we will explain to you that we have a legitimate interest in recording information that will help us to demonstrate what advice we have given to students should any issues arise. We will explain to you what this means and how your information will be recorded.

**How to withdraw your consent**

**If you wish to withdraw your consent for UWLSU Advice to contact you in relation to your case**, you can email your allocated Advisor or you can email the Advice Manager asking them not to contact you. They will respond telling you that they will not communicate with you any further and will then stop contacting you.

**If you do not wish for UWLSU Advice to contact you for feedback** about our service, you can email your allocated Advisor or you can email the Advice Manager asking them not to contact you for feedback.

You may still receive general emails from UWLSU which may promote the advice service.

**If you wish to withdraw your consent for UWLSU Advice to act on your behalf** if actions have previously been agreed but not yet carried out, you can email your allocated Advisor or the Advice Manager asking them to stop acting on your behalf.

**If you wish to withdraw your consent for UWL Advice to hold specific information on you**, you should email your allocated Advisor to discuss your options. UWLSU Advice may need to retain information because we have a legal obligation to do so, or because to not hold the information may impact on our ability to help you in future or to document what work we have done to support you if there is any dispute about this.

**How we’ll use your personal data**

We will use your personal data to do the following:

-**Set up a case or enquiry record** for you on our secure casework management system so that we can track the work we have done with you and so that we can monitor and review your case as appropriate to ensure we are supporting you fully.

**-To contact you regarding any actions or support we have agreed** to provide you with, and to follow-up with you about your case.

-**To provide appropriate advice** that is based on the information you tell us.

-To contact anyone at UWL or externally **who you have agreed** that we can contact.

-**In rare cases, we may breach your confidentiality** or share your information without seeking your permission. This may happen in the following circumstances:

* If we believe that you may be at risk of harming yourself or someone else
* If we believe that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk based on information you have given to us
* If we are required to do so by law (in cases of money laundering, fraud or acts of terrorism)

In such cases, we may contact:

* UWL’s Head of Student Services or a Senior Member of the Welfare Team
* UWL’s Security Team
* The emergency services
* A local government authority

**The kind of personal data we record and use**

1. **Registration form & Check-in Database**

We ask for and record the following personal information about you on our registration form and check-in database **when you** **initially contact UWLSU Advice** so that we can process your case efficiently at the point of check-in:

-Name  
-Student Number  
-Course  
-Contact telephone number  
-Contact email  
-Consent to set up a case or enquiry file for you  
-The ways in which you consent to be contacted

We then use this information to set up an enquiry for you on our secure casework management system (see case files & casework below).

1. **Appointment Recording Form & Consent to share Form**

We use an Appointment Recording form in appointments to write a summary of your case and establish your options in line with the outcome/s you’ve told us you are seeking. This may involve us recording sensitive information that you tell us, for instance, about an illness you’ve had or a bereavement you have experienced. We will also record the services or individuals we have your permission to contact specifically in relation to your case with us on this form.

You can choose what to tell us and this does not affect your ability to access our service for advice, and if you are unsure about disclosing something to us, you can ask your Advisor what information they might need to know to help you and if there is any information they would be required to report if you disclosed it.

We will also discuss whether or not we will need to share your data with any other service or department at UWL in order to support you effectively, if we will need to request any information about you, or if we can contact other services or departments on your behalf to arrange meetings for you. We will discuss this with you and ask your permission to do this unless we are legally required to share information without your permission.

1. **Case files & Casework**

We upload all documents relating to your case onto Advice Pro, our secure casework management system. We also upload all emails and any other correspondence we have with you or others about your case so that we can monitor and refer to the advice we have given to you at any stage of your case.

1. **Client feedback form**

We have an online survey which we send to students to ask for your feedback usually when your Advisor closes your case. You can opt-out of being asked to take part in this survey when you first register with our service and opting-out does not affect your ability to access our service in any way.

We really value student feedback however, and any feedback you do give us will be used to make our service better. If you give us permission, we may also contact you about your feedback.

**How we’ll store your personal data**

We store your personal data in four main ways:

-On our **secure casework management system** (Advice Pro)

-In **Microsoft Outlook** when you or anyone else emails us about your case

-Through **Survey Monkey** when you provide feedback through our **client feedback form** on UWLSU Advice

-We record the name, student number, contact email and/or telephone on our **Microsoft Excel** **check-in database** when students make contact UWLSU Advice requesting an advice appointment during our advice service hours. The nature of your enquiry is not recorded on this database and it is password protected.

We do not store paper files in UWLSU Advice, and we will only print paper copies of your information if we have agreed to represent you at a meeting and need to bring hard copies of any documents with us to support you.

***Advice Pro***

Advice Pro advocates privacy by design and as such annually employ the NCC Group to undertake penetration testing, one of the top three companies providing the service. Advicepro is a highly trusted case management system with the advice sector and is fully compliant with the GDPR.

**Breach notification**

Advice Pro have a procedure in place in the event of a data breach. The UWLSU Advice Manager is responsible for ensuring the Primary Contact details held by Advice Pro are up-to-date to ensure there is no delay in reporting a data breach. If a member of UWLSU Advice staff is informed of a data breach involving Advice Pro then they are to alert Advice Pro immediately via [dataprotection@acm-solutions.co.uk](mailto:dataprotection@acm-solutions.co.uk). As well as informing Advice Pro we are also required to inform the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) ideally within 72 hours and the client/s affected.

**Destroying your personal data**

At the beginning of each new academic year, all closed electronic case records which are over six years old will be deleted from Advice Pro by the Advice Manager.

Any paper records relating to a case which an Advisor has printed out for a meeting will be confidentially destroyed. Any paper items you give us will be returned to you after being electronically scanned and uploaded onto Advice Pro. Paper items are placed in our confidential waste bin and destroyed by our contractor Shred-It [www.shredit.co.uk](http://www.shredit.co.uk) .

**How we might share your personal data**

We will not share your personal data without your express consent unless we are required to do so by law or if we believe that you are at risk of harming yourself or someone else. Otherwise, we will ask for your consent to share relevant information with individuals or services within UWL in order to **progress your case** and/or to **support you to access other services** that we have identified may be able to help you based on the information you have given us.

Who we might share information with when you give your consent:

-Academic school staff  
-UWL Student Services  
-Central Services (such as the Mitigation Team in Academic Registry)

-Anyone else you might suggest we contact

The University of West London have rigorous processes in place to ensure compliance with the GDPR and as such, we trust that the student data we provide will be treated in accordance with GDPR.

**Email security**

UWLSU Advice work by email primarily takes place on computers at UWL’s three campuses. UWLSU Advice staff will only access their UWLSU emails through a secure server (e.g on UWL campuses or using Eduroam, which is password protected).

Our UWLSU Advice account ([su.advice@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:su.advice@uwl.ac.uk)) is staffed by all UWLSU Advice staff on a rota’d basis, however no other UWLSU staff have access to this email account and the password is updated every six months, or when a member of staff leaves the organisation. All other UWLSU Advice staff accounts are managed solely by the individual person who owns them (e.g. firstname.surname@uwl.ac.uk).

All emails pertaining to a student’s enquiry or case are uploaded onto Advice Pro and the emails deleted from Outlook.

**Client rights under GDPR**

***Right to Access***

Clients have the right to an electronic copy of their data and to know whether or not personal data concerning them is being processed, where and what for. Clients wishing to have a copy of their data can email the advice service manager with their request. Once the identity of the enquirer is confirmed as the client, UWLSU Advice will provide, free of charge, an electronic copy of the client’s data –including all case files – within one month of the request.

***Right to be forgotten***

The right to be forgotten entitles the client to have the data controller erase their personal data, cease further dissemination of the data and potentially have third parties halt processing of the data. The UWLSU Advice Manager can delete cases and clients from Advice Pro, **however this may not be possible where we have a legitimate interest to retain this data**. If a client wishes us to delete their data from Advice Pro they can contact their Advisor or the UWLSU Advice Manager to discuss the feasibility of their request, and where possible, this will be actioned by the UWLSU Advice Manager. Before a clients’ data is deleted the UWLSU Advice Manager shall consult a legal adviser and our insurance provider to seek advice before deleting any files. Consideration will be given to whether the client has the right to have their data deleted based on their reasoning and if the clients desire take precedent over their long term interest, e.g. complaint/appeal.

The UWLSU Advice Manager will ensure the client is fully aware of the implications of deleting their data, highlighting to them the options available. A response to the clients request will be provided within 30 days from the initial request. The UWLSU Advice Manager is responsible for keeping a record of all instances when a client requests to be ‘forgotten’.

Confirmation of the clients identify will be required before engaging in discussion with the client.

***Data Portability***

Clients have the right to access their data in a machine readable format. As such Advice Pro has added the option to export the client and case files in XML format.

***Right to Rectification***

If a client informs us that their data is incorrect they can complete another client registration form with the correct details and this will be updated. Alternatively, they can contact their Advisor or the Advice Manager and discuss the updates required, after their identity has been confirmed.

***Right to Restrict Processing***

Clients will have the option to consent or not for the differing uses of their data. Therefore a client may consent for an AQS auditor to review their file, but not for their feedback about our service to be used. This gives our clients to control over what we do with their data.

You should note that some of these rights, for example the right to require us to transfer your data to another service provider or the right to object to automated decision making, may not apply as they have specific requirements and exemptions which apply to them and they may not apply to personal information recorded and stored by us. For example, we do not use automated decision making in relation to your personal data. However, some have no conditions attached, so your right to withdraw consent or object to processing for direct marketing are absolute rights.

Whilst this privacy notice sets out a general summary of your legal rights in respect of personal information, this is a very complex area of law. More information about your legal rights can be found on the Information Commissioner’s website at <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>.

To exercise any of the above rights, or if you have any questions relating to your rights, please contact us by emailing ( Managers email address)

We are here to help and encourage you to contact us to resolve any complaints.

**Changes to this notice**

We may update this privacy notice from time to time. When we change this notice in a material way, we will update the version date at the bottom of this page. For significant changes to this notice we will try to give you reasonable notice unless we are prevented from doing so. Where required by law we will seek your consent to changes in the way we use your personal information.

**Deferral of Work**

UWLSU Advice will attempt to help all students resolve their issues at the earliest possible opportunity. Advisors must agree with the student a timeframe and next steps, based on the possible range of outcomes.

However, on occasion, and for a number of reasons, delays may occur. These reasons, or such occasions, may include:

* The need to refer to a UWLSU Advice colleague who is not at that time available;
* The need to refer to an external party who is not at that time available;
* The lack of availability, in a non-urgent case, of the Advisor responsible;
* High volumes of casework, particularly outside term-time when UWLSU Advice capacity is reduced;
* UWLSU Advice staff are engaged with priority cases, as defined by the UWLSU Service manager or Senior Caseworker;
* IT failure;
* Closure of the University;
* University procedures which lay down set timings;
* The need for more information from a student.

Closures to UWLSU Advice of more than 3 working days should be published in advance on UWLSU’s website.

UWLSU Advice creates an obligation on itself to respond to non-direct communication within the following timeframes:

* Email 3 working days
* Tweet/Facebook message 3 working days

Where these timeframes cannot be adhered to, Advisors will inform the Advice Manager and work together to ensure the management of student expectations, including by sending holding replies where appropriate. Wherever possible the student should be informed of the reason for the delay.

UWLSU Advice staff are encouraged to allow each other access to their calendars and ensure that case files are up-to-date on Advice Pro to mitigate the impact of non-availability for work, and to utilise the tasks and key dates functions in Advice Pro.

**Supervision**

The purpose of supervision is to ensure a high quality advice service and to ensure that all Advisors receive the necessary support to carry out their casework effectively.

Supervision will aim to:

* Give the Advisor an opportunity to discuss their casework practice and their responses to challenging cases
* Monitor the quality and accuracy of advice
* Ensure that workloads match the Advice Workers’ level of experience
* Identify training and development needs
* Identify and correct deficiencies in an Advice Worker’s casework
* Identify any policy or resource issues that may arise

# Formal Supervision

Advice Workers who have been employed for more than one academic year shall have formal supervision at least once a month. Supervision shall be conducted on a one-to-one basis in private. New members of staff shall have supervisions every two weeks for the first 2 months, reducing to twice a month after this period. Advisors can request additional supervisions when needed.

The Advice Manager shall be responsible for supervising the Advisors’ and will set-up a recurring supervision meeting with each Advisor. The Head of Membership shall normally be responsible for supervising the Advice Manager. Supervisors will use the Supervision 1-2-1 proformance which can be found in the Advice Team folder on the Shared Drive.

The supervision session will evaluate and monitor the Advisor’s casework for any cases the Advisor raises for discussion and check that procedures have been followed and appropriate action either planned or taken, this should normally be recorded via the ‘quick review function’ on Advice Pro. An Advisor’s training needs in terms of skills, knowledge and personal development will also be discussed.

Independent file reviews are conducted separately from supervisions by advisors for peer review this allows advisors to have open and honest discussions in supervision referencing the case reviews. In supervision the advice manager may reference the case work by reviewing the case reviews conducted by the advisors.

Supervision is a two-way process and both the Supervisor and the Advisor may wish to comment on specific issues. Any such issues should be raised in advance of the session so that both parties may prepare for this.

Formal supervision should not be seen as a replacement for ongoing day to day supervision. Advisors are encouraged to raise and discuss problems with the Advice Manager as and when they occur. In the same way, if an Advisor has a complex case that they wish to discuss, this should be brought to the attention of the Advice Manager immediately as it arises and not kept until the formal supervision session.

For the purposes of the Advice Quality Standard accreditation, the Supervisor is required to have two full years of advice experience; in circumstances where the Advice Manager does not possess this experience, the role of Supervisor shall formally be delegated to any other member of UWLSU Advice staff who does possess such experience. Where no member of UWLSU Advice possesses the required amount of

experience, the Advice Manager shall be responsible for identifying a suitable external source of supervision.

# Recording

The supervisor will be responsible for making and keeping a record of the supervision and sending this, along with any actions, to the Advisor.

**Providing Updates on Changes in Law**

From time-to-time, relevant aspects of UK legislation and case law may evolve. The Advice Manager is responsible for ensuring the timely distribution of all such updates to UWLSU Advisors. Such updates may arrive at UWLSU Advice via mailbases (e.g. ACSU, Twitter), external experts or subscription (e.g. AdviceUK, UKCISA.)

The Advice Manager is also responsible for ensuring that Advisors maintain and develop their knowledge, including through appropriate training. Advisors should take joint responsibility for this, by identifying gaps in their knowledge and skills, as well as potential suitable training and development opportunities.

The Advice Manager may also, from time-to-time, update and receive updates from UWLSU colleagues via e.g. weekly management meetings.

The Advice Manager or Head of Membership should ensure that all changes to UWL’s regulations and policies affecting student casework are communicated to Advisors before the start of each academic year or after the UWL Committee at which they are approved (should approvals and changes occur in-year).

**Internal File Review Policy**

A file review is undertaken by another advisor (not the case owner). It is intended to check whether the case record is clear and accurate; and whether policies, procedures and guidance have been followed correctly. A file review should also confirm that correct, relevant and thorough advice has been provided. The Advice Manager or their Supervisor (normally the Head of Membership) should conduct internal file reviews in accordance with this policy and the internal file review procedure, which can be found in the Advice Team folder on the shared drive.

**Frequency of File reviews**

File reviews should be arranged for all staff who give advice. The frequency of reviews is monthly, two cases are reviewed that have been closed that month and two cases that have been open and active that month. A total of four cases are reviewed for each advisor monthly

**Preparing for a file review**

* The reviewer should have a good understanding of the Advicepro file review process.
* The reviewer needs to have administration rights to Advicepro.
* The reviewer should be competent in the area of advice under review.

***New Advice Staff***

A new Advisor will work on cases with the Advice Manager and other Advisors for at least 4 weeks. During this time the new Advisor will observe and learn how to use the Advice Pro system.

During the following 2 weeks the Advisor may start to take on cases, and the Advice Manager will supervise closely, informally checking each case. Four formal file reviews should be undertaken during this time.

The Advice Manager has the discretion to vary the frequency of file reviews, dependent on previous experience of the new Advisor and quality of work.

**After the review**

After the review the Advice Manager will briefly check the reviewed cases to ensure that advisors have followed up on the corrective actions if required.

Actions should be followed up by the Advisor and reported in supervisions, reviews actions should be closed when all actions are completed.

The staff member who undertook the File Review should diarise to follow up actions within 5 working days - or ensure these are done by the date proposed by the reviewer.

The file reviews should be secured and ensure they are accessible to the Advisor for reference and follow-up through Advice Pro.

As part of the annual review of service performance the Advice Manager shall be responsible for carrying out a random annual review of at least 5 File Review Forms for each Advisor and follow-up actions, to identify potential organisational improvements and emerging trends. A central record of file review references should be kept.

Advisors are encouraged to discuss cases and, where appropriate, proactively request a file review in order to improve the quality of the service and share the expert knowledge and experienced gained.

**UWLSU Advice Complaints Policy**

**Making a complaint**

Complaints shall be dealt with via the UWLSU complaints procedure outlined in the Bye-Laws, which is available to students at www.uwlsu.com - this will be under the governance section and shall be emailed to students wishing to make a complaint.

It is recommended that informal complaints are investigated in the following way:

1. Where the complaint is about a UWLSU Advisor, it is recommended that the complaint is investigated informally by the Advice Manager to attempt to resolve the issue directly with the student;
2. Where the complaint is about the Advice Manager, it is recommended that the complaint is investigated informally by the Head of Membership to attempt to resolve the issue directly with the student.
3. Where an informal resolution is inappropriate or not reached, then the student can pursue a formal complaint which will be resolved in line with the UWLSU Bye-Laws.

UWLSU Advice will keep a central record of student complaints in order monitor quality in the service and support staff training and development, the database is management-access only and can be found in the Advice Folder on the Shared Drive.

**Staff Safety**

Giving advice is not risk-free. All of us have a responsibility to care for our own safety and that of others. Staff should follow personal safety procedures set out here, and report any shortcomings which could affect Advisor safety. Staff are expected to follow UWLSU policies and procedures and any UWLSU Advice risk assessments to help ensure the safety of staff and service users.

UWLSU Advice staff are not expected to tolerate abusive, threatening or aggressive language or behaviour towards them by students or their representatives, nor to assist a student who comes in to the service in an intoxicated state. Students displaying inappropriate behaviour will be asked to leave and Security staff will be alerted if, in the Advisor’s opinion, this is necessary.

Details of aggressive or violent behaviour should be recorded on case notes. If a student is at risk of having service withdrawn by an Advisor, this should be recorded using the customised feature on Advice Pro (risk of withdrawal of service).

When interviewing students the Advisor should ensure s/he is positioned between the student and the door so it would be easy to leave the room promptly and the door should be unlocked.

If staff have concerns it may be appropriate to ask a colleague to check on them during the interview. Staff should knock on the door and say: *‘The person you have been trying to contact urgently is on the phone, do you want to speak with him?* This gives the advisor an opportunity to leave the room or continue with interview.

Staff should always speak with the Advice Manager if concerned that the behaviour of a student could cause a danger to themselves or others. Examples may include; substance abuse, mental health crisis, or previous challenging behaviour of the student or associates.

Advisors should not see students outside of published service hours unless at least one other staff member is present in at the UWLSU office at the campus where the advice appointment is taking place. If an Advisor is with a student after 5pm a colleague should interrupt the session to advise that UWLSU Advice will be closing. In the unlikely event that an Advisor is working alone in an office, they should follow the UWLSU lone working risk assessment. Advisors **should not** hold appointments when no other UWLSU staff member is on site at either SMR or Paragon.

When meeting with a student outside of the UWLSU Advice Office at Paragon or St Mary’s Road then the advisor should put details of the student, time and venue of the meeting on their shared Outlook calendar.

Advisors should be aware the duty of confidentiality continues beyond the UWLSU Advice Offices.

UWLSU designated Advice rooms at SMR and Paragon are fitted with panic alarms. Responsibility for testing these alarms is with UWL Security, however the Advice Manager should send an annual reminder to Security and request the outcome of the test in writing.

**No off site meetings should be taking place – where possible opt for virtual meetings.**

**Student Feedback Policy**

UWLSU Advice is committed to quality, both in terms of meeting the needs of its students and in the working life of its staff.

In order to meet the needs of students, it is vital to know what their views are about the service, so that feedback can be embedded in service reviews and operational planning.

Termly we should be taking the following measures to gather this information:

**Surveys**

* A feedback survey will be sent to all students via email when an Advisor closes their case.
* Students will also be invited to complete a post-appointment survey, which is the most common feedback we collect, this is the same survey link as the case closure.

**Complaints**

* The UWLSU Advice Manager maintains a record of complaints made against UWLSU Advice. Within the parameters of confidentiality, any complaints received during the year will be included in the annual review for analysis.

UWLSU Advice actively encourages and welcomes ideas, suggestions and criticisms from its students. If at any time a student wishes to make a contribution which will aid staff in the planning process, they are invited to speak to a member of staff.

**Statement on Maintaining Quality and Standards in UWLSU Advice**

The Advice Manager is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of quality and standards in UWLSU Advice and for reviewing the policies and procedures of UWLSU Advice on an annual basis.

UWLSU Advice currently holds Advice Quality Standard (AQS) accreditation, the Advice Manager is the Quality Lead responsible for ensuring that UWLSU Advice meets and maintains AQS standards. The Head of Membership may act as the Quality Lead in the absence of the Advice Manager.

**Reviewing UWLSU Advice’s Services, Policies and Procedures**

UWLSU Advice’s services, policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated regularly reflect the following:

* Service user feedback
* Partner feedback (i.e. UWL)
* The needs of UWLSU as identified during the organisation’s business and strategic planning cycles
* AQS standards framework
* Good practice in the sector identified by national organisations such as The National Union of Students or AdviceUK.
* Changes to legislation and local policies and procedures (i.e. UWL’s Academic Regulations)

A review of these areas ensures robust services, policies and procedures that are fit for purpose.

**Review of UWLSU Advice Services**

UWLSU Advice Services are reviewed during UWLSU’s business and strategic planning cycles (normally December – February) and adjusted annually afterwards or in response to feedback from the Planning and Evaluation Group when programme and project level initiation documents are submitted to the Group. The Advice Programme should be evaluated at the Planning and Evaluation Group on a semesterly basis (usually Jan/Feb for semester 1 and July/August for semester 2.

**Review of UWLSU Advice Policies & Procedures**

UWLSU Advice policies & procedures are kept within the UWLSU Advice manual and reviewed and updated annually, normally at the end of UWL’s academic year (July-August). A Quality Review paper should be completed at end of each academic year along with the Policies & Procedures Review and both the updated manual and the quality paper should be submitted to the Compliance Group for approval and noting respectively.

UWLSU’s Compliance Management Plan also requires an annual compliance return for UWLSU Advice, which assesses compliance against the relevant particulars of the Compliance Management Plan. This is submitted in line with the Compliance Group cycle of business each year.

**UWLSU Advice Withdrawal of Service Policy**

UWLSU Advice is fully committed to supporting UWL students by following the principles laid out in our Service Standards Statement. We understand without doubt that we exist for our members and our mission is to disrupt inequality through our work. As a last resort, and in serious or specific circumstances, there may be instances where UWLSU needs to withdraw service from a student.

**When withdrawal of service is considered**

Service withdrawal may be considered if one or both of the following is true: 1) the student’s behaviour is unacceptable AND/OR 2) UWLSU Advice is unable to continue to support them because of a clear policy constraint.

1. This policy may be enacted if a student exhibits any of the following:

* Behaviour/language deemed to be violent or abusive towards UWLSU Advice staff
* Behaviour/language deemed to be manipulative towards UWLSU Advice staff
* Behaviour/language deemed to be threatening or harassing to UWLSU Advice staff

The Advice Manager, together with the Head of Membership, are responsible for interpreting whether or not a student’s behaviour warrants the withdrawal of service from UWLSU Advice on a case by case basis. Advisors are responsible for identifying concerns early, and for working with the Advice Manager or Head of Membership to find a solution and, where possible, give the student an opportunity to correct any challenging behaviours or to understand why UWLSU is unable to provide support in their case.

UWLSU Advice staff will establish if a student has exhibited unacceptable behaviour using UWL’s “Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour Policy” and” UWLSU’s Members Code of Conduct”. UWLSU Advice Staff will first enact the UWLSU Advice risk assessment in order to maintain the safety of themselves and others when responding to unacceptable behaviour and then this policy is likely to apply.

1. This policy may also be enacted in any of the following circumstances:

* All avenues have been exhausted in a student’s case
* There is an irreconcilable conflict of interest in a student’s case
* The presenting issue/s in a student’s case is/are beyond the competency of UWLSU Advice Service

The principles of fairness and objectivity are important here. An Advisor is encouraged to discuss with the Advice Manager or Head of Membership all cases where they are concerned about a student’s behaviour in any way, or if there is a risk that we cannot continue to advise the student. This allows the Manager to establish the facts, assess the level of risk and determine if any aspect of this policy applies.

It may be appropriate to consider alternative options, for example transferring the case to another advisor if the relationship has been deemed by either the student or the Advisor to have broken down. To be clear, the student’s assessment that a relationship has broken down with their Advisor does not mean that we tolerate unacceptable behaviour of any kind towards a staff member.

In all cases, the student should be made aware if they are at risk of being withdrawn from the Advice Service and why. hey should also be notified if service is formally withdrawn and be given the reasons for the withdrawal, along with any options that may have been identified for further support (if appropriate) and with details of how to escalate any concerns they may have about how their case has been handled. Any formal warnings or withdrawal notices should use the relevant form in the Resource Hub on the LDrive.

A note should also be made in the case file on Advice Pro relating to the withdrawal risk.

**Stages to enact the policy**

***Instances of unacceptable behaviour***

**Informal warning:** where possible (e.g. where the student’s behaviour is deemed unacceptable but not sufficiently serious for a formal warning) an email should be sent to the student outlining when, where and how their behaviour was unacceptable, set clear expectations for future communications, and outline the potential consequences are of further instances of unacceptable behaviour.

**Formal warning of service withdrawal:** if unacceptable behaviour persists after an informal warning, or if an instance of unacceptable behaviour is deemed serious enough for a formal warning to be issued immediately –an email should be sent to the student outlining when, where and how their behaviour was unacceptable, set clear expectations and conditions for future communications, and clarify that any further instances of unacceptable behaviour will result in service withdrawal.

**Withdrawal of service:** if unacceptable behaviour persists after a formal warning, or if an instance of unacceptable behaviour is deemed serious enough that UWLSU Advice should disengage immediately from the student ) - an email should be sent to the student outlining when, where and how their behaviour was unacceptable, explain that service has been withdrawn and include details of how the student can escalate any concerns they have about how their case has been handled.

The email should also make clear any conditions (if applicable) in which the student may re-engage with the Advice Service, and any potential consequences of continuing to engage with the Advice Service after service has been withdrawn.

Examples of behaviour where immediate withdrawal will be considered include, but are not limited to, any act of physical violence towards any member of staff, or any abusive language that violates the 2010 Equality Act.

**Further action:** UWLSU reserves the right to take any additional action that the Advice Manager or Head of Membership deem necessary in response to any instance of unacceptable behaviour. This may include disclosing a potential risk of harm to third parties, initiating member disciplinary procedures under UWLSU’s Bye-Laws, reporting unacceptable behaviour to UWL and, in serious cases, the police.

***Instances where UWLSU Advice is unable to continue to support the student***

**Notification email:** the student should be emailed informing them that we have identified that we are unable to provide further advice. The email should explain the rationale for the decision, under what conditions we may be able to provide advice to the student in future, any actions they can take to progress their case and (where appropriate) the details of another service that can help with their issue.

**Right to appeal:** Students wishing to appeal the withdrawal of service may do so by following the UWLSU Complaints procedure in the Bye-Laws. Students should be made aware of who to contact with their complaint in the withdrawal of service email.

**The procedure**

* An Advisor identifies a concern about a student or our capacity to advise them
* Manager gives action plan and next steps (e.g. suggests a new approach, or initiates any stage of the withdrawal policy)
* Advisor notifies the student & records on Advice Pro as appropriate
* If behaviour or situation persists, Advisor reports to Manager
* Manager gives action plan and next steps (e.g. suggests a new approach, or initiates any stage of the withdrawal policy)
* Advisor notifies the student & records on Advice Pro as appropriate