



## Counselling Service Guidelines for Telephone and Online Counselling

### Introduction

These guidelines are in addition to Maynooth University Counselling Service Policies, University Data Protection Policies and Privacy Notices. The following guidelines are essential for the delivery and operation of telephone and online counselling provision.

### Service Availability

- The provision of Telephone and Online counselling is by appointment only.
- Please contact the Counselling Service Reception on **01-7083554** or use the [Call-back Request](#) to book an appointment.
- Phone calls and call-back requests will be responded to during office hours (9am-5pm Mon-Fri).
- If you are new to the Service or returning after a long break an initial 30 min phone consultation will be scheduled first. This is called a Drop-In appointment.
- Please state your preference for a phone consultation or online session if booking a follow-up appointment.
- Staff email addresses are not used as a point of contact to make appointments with the Counselling Service.

### Out of Hours

- For support outside of office hours please refer to the list of external supports available [here](#).
- **Text about it** is a free 24/7 anonymous text support service - please **Text MU to 50808**.
- If your life is in imminent danger, please call emergency number 911/112.

### Confidentiality

- All Telephone and Online sessions adhere to strict confidential practices.
- Your counsellor will ensure that they are operating in a confidential setting.
- Please read our [Confidentiality Policy](#) prior to your Telephone or Online appointment.
- Please ensure you can take the call or online session in a private and confidential setting.
- Every effort **MUST** be made on your part to protect your own confidentiality.
- If you choose to be in a place where others can hear you, your counsellor cannot be responsible for protecting your confidentiality.
- Please note that the counsellor may need to gather some personal information at the start of your call. All personal information shared is held securely on the Counselling Service database.
- Please note that recording of sessions, taking screenshots, etc of any session is not permitted.

### Phone Consultations

- If you have scheduled a phone consultation your counsellor will ring you at the appointed time.
- Please honour the time set aside for you by making sure you are free to take the call.
- Please ensure your phone is fully charged.
- If the reception is poor the call may need to end and be rescheduled for another time.
- If you arrange a time but are unable to take the call please cancel using the cancellation [link](#).
- You can reschedule another call by sending a request via the Call-back Facility or contacting Reception.
- Phone consultations are generally 40-50 minutes in duration.

### Online /Video Calls

- Treat online appointments as you would if attending the Counselling Service in person.
- Please dress appropriately for the video call (i.e no pyjamas!).
- Please avoid eating during the session and turn off the TV or other devices.
- If you are not using your phone for the session put it on silent.
- When an online counselling session is offered, you will receive a link for the secure online session via TEAMS to your student email address.
- Please ensure you are in a private location where you can speak openly without being overheard or interrupted by others.
- Wearing a headset increases confidentiality and improves sound quality of sessions.
- Please note the scheduled video call is arranged with you only. Inviting others in needs to be agreed with your counsellor.
- Please ensure that you leave the meeting when the session is over.
- Use of the chat function is agreed at the outset and may be used to share resources.

### Loss of Connection

- If technology fails before or during a counselling session our policy is to call you back twice before the assigned time of your session ends. A follow-up text will be sent if the session ends abruptly.
- If connection is lost during an online session, your counsellor will call you on your mobile phone to troubleshoot the reason for lost connection. If they cannot reach you, they will remain available to you for the duration of your assigned time should you manage to reconnect.
- If the loss of connection is not resolved, you can opt to continue the session over the phone or reschedule your appointment.
- Please note that too many distractions can interrupt the quality and comfort of both phone consultations and online sessions. This may also occur for the Counsellor if they are working remotely. If a solution cannot be found the appointment will be rescheduled.

### Location of Student

- In case of an emergency, we need to confirm your location for both telephone and online appointments.
- Please know that per best practices and ethical guidelines we can only practice in the region we are based in, therefore you need to inform Maynooth University Counselling Service if your therapy location has changed to a different jurisdiction i.e overseas.

### Follow-up Support & Self-care

- Please ensure you have some support nearby or at hand following your appointment if needs be.
- Speaking to a counsellor online or over the phone may evoke upsetting emotions and feelings.
- Take time to engage in some caring self-care practices following your sessions.
- The Counselling Service [Self-help Resources](#) page may offer some helpful ideas.
- The Counselling Service [Workshops](#) may provide extra support to you in addition to your counselling appointments.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Service Protocol