

Students' Access to Counselling Services

Document reference: LAAT-GOV-POL-CNS-001

Department / Function: Student Support / Wellbeing

Owner: Student Wellbeing Lead, [to be named]

Oversight committee: Academic Board

Approving body: Academic Board (recommended) / Board of Governors (final approval)

Status: Draft

Date approved: 12/03/2026

Review date: Annually from the approval date

Supersedes: None

Regularity Alignment with Office for Students (OfS) Conditions

The Students' Access to Counselling Services Policy forms part of the London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) student wellbeing and support framework. It ensures that students have safe, confidential, and equitable access to mental health and counselling services, supporting both academic engagement and personal development.

The policy aligns with the Equality Act 2010 and with: **OfS Condition B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement):** Ensuring appropriate mental health support and wellbeing services are available to students. Furthermore, it aligns with **OfS Condition C1 (Consumer Protection Law):** Ensuring transparency regarding availability, access, and scope of counselling services.

Through this policy, LAAT demonstrates its commitment to maintaining a **safe, supportive, and inclusive environment** for all students.

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for students to access **counselling and mental health support services**. The policy aims to:

- Promote **student wellbeing, resilience, and mental health**.
- Provide **timely and confidential access** to professional counselling support.
- Support students in addressing personal, emotional, and psychological issues that may affect their academic performance.
- Clarify responsibilities of students, staff, and support personnel in accessing and delivering counselling services.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all registered undergraduate and postgraduate students, including full-time, part-time, and distance-learning students. Counselling services provide short- to medium-term therapeutic support and do not replace NHS or emergency mental health services.

If there is any conflict between this policy and validating university regulations or partner policies (for academic/ student-facing areas), the partner's requirements will normally take precedence, and this policy will be interpreted and updated accordingly.

3. Definitions

- **Counselling Services:** Professional, confidential support to address personal, emotional, or psychological issues.
- **Confidentiality:** Information shared in counselling sessions is protected and only disclosed with consent or under legal safeguarding obligations.
- **Crisis Support:** Immediate assistance provided for students at risk of serious mental health issues or self-harm.
- **Referral:** Direction to internal or external specialist services for further support.

4. Principles

- **Confidentiality:** Student information is protected in line with GDPR and ethical standards.
- **Accessibility:** Services are available to all students without discrimination.
- **Professionalism:** Counselling is delivered by trained, qualified staff or approved external providers.
- **Student-Centred:** Support is responsive to individual needs and circumstances.
- **Integration:** Counselling services complement academic and wellbeing support within LAAT.

5. Policy Statement

LAAT recognises the importance of **student mental health and wellbeing** in academic success and personal development.

The Governing Body receives assurance that:

- Students have timely access to confidential counselling services.
- Services are delivered by qualified staff in line with professional and legal standards.
- Referral pathways to internal and external specialist support are clearly defined.
- Staff are trained to recognise mental health concerns and signpost support appropriately.

6. Governance, Committees and Terms of Reference

6.1 Governance and Oversight

Governing Body:

- Approves the Counselling Services Policy.
- Reviews annual reports on service usage, student satisfaction, and compliance.

Executive Oversight:

- The **Student Wellbeing Lead** is accountable for operational delivery and compliance with the policy.

6.2 Oversight Committee – Terms of Reference

In relation to this policy, the Oversight Committee will:

1. Review and approve the policy periodically.
2. Monitor service effectiveness through KPIs, audits, and student feedback.
3. Ensure compliance with OfS conditions and statutory requirements.
4. Recommend improvements to enhance student experience.
5. Report annually to the Board of Governors / SMT on service provision and emerging trends.

7. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – Overview

Accessing Counselling Services:

- Students may self-refer or be referred by academic staff.
- Services are booked via the Student Wellbeing Office or designated online portal.

Assessment and Support:

- Initial assessment identifies student needs, urgency, and appropriate support pathway.
- Individual or group sessions are scheduled according to availability and need.

Crisis Intervention:

- Emergency support is available for students at risk of harm to themselves or others.
- Referral to external crisis services is made if required.

Record Keeping:

- Student records are confidential, GDPR-compliant, and stored securely.

8. Regulatory, Partner and Legal Alignment

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- OfS Regulatory Framework (B2 – Resources, Support, and Student Engagement)
- Professional ethical standards for counselling.

9. Responsible People / Roles include

- **Student Wellbeing Lead (policy owner): To be appointed**
Operational oversight of counselling services and compliance
- **Dean: Dr Manoj Ponugubati**
Strategic oversight of student wellbeing and academic support
- **HR manager: Ms Ginny Mishra**
Staff training on student support and safeguarding
- **Academic Staff and Module leaders**
Refer students to counselling services when appropriate

List of people and contact email

Role	Name	Contact Email
Student Wellbeing Lead (Policy Owner)	To be appointed	[To be inserted]
Dean	Dr Manoj Ponugubati	manoj@laat.ac.uk
HR Manager	Ms Ginny Mishra	ginny.m@laat.ac.uk

10. List of Documents

- Student Handbook
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

11. Evidence

- Counselling service usage records
- Student feedback surveys
- Staff training records
- Referral records
- Governance minutes

Mapping table for evidence items related to OfS condition

Evidence Item	Purpose / What it Demonstrates	Relevant OfS Condition(s)
Counselling service usage records	Demonstrates that students have access to appropriate mental health and wellbeing support services and that these services are	B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement), E2 (Management and Governance)

	monitored for effectiveness and uptake	
Student feedback surveys	Shows that student voice is captured, analysed, and used to improve services, teaching quality, and overall student experience	B1 (Academic Experience), B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement), E2 (Management and Governance)
Staff training records	Demonstrates that staff are appropriately trained to support students, including safeguarding, wellbeing, and academic delivery	B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement), E2 (Management and Governance), E3 (Accountability)
Referral records	Shows that students are appropriately identified, supported, and referred to internal or external services, ensuring safeguarding and wellbeing needs are addressed	B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement), E2 (Management and Governance), C1 (Consumer Protection Law)
Governance minutes	Demonstrates oversight, accountability, and monitoring of student support services, ensuring institutional compliance and continuous improvement	E1 (Public Interest Governance), E2 (Management and Governance), E3 (Accountability)