



Abertay University

Counselling Annual Report 2012-13

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KEY Results

- ❖ Average wait for an appointment was 7.0 days
- ❖ 11% Increase in Clients who used the Counselling Service
- ❖ This year more students contacted us for counselling than ever before.
- ❖ We provided 1328 Counselling sessions for 312 students-a record
- ❖ 71% had 5 sessions or less
- ❖ 83% got an appointment within 2 weeks of contacting the service
- ❖ 20% of the students we saw were at risk.

In Client Evaluation

- ❖ 93% said first appointment was soon enough
- ❖ Over 96% of students were happy with the booking system, waiting area and counselling room.
- ❖ 97% reported that their concern was harming their studies
- ❖ In total 67% of students considered that counselling to have helped them stay at university
- ❖ In total 59% of students stated that counselling helped them do better in their academic work.
- ❖ In total 83% of students stated that counselling contributed to improving their overall student experience
- ❖ In total 76% of students stated that counselling helped them develop skills useful for obtaining future employment.
- ❖ 98% of students said they would recommend the Counselling Service to a friend.

P2P

- ❖ We trained a new team of student mentors. There are now 38 trained student mentors.
- ❖ 21 mentors in SHSS; 8 in SET; 6 in SAMG; and 3 in DBS
- ❖ 32 are female 6 are male
- ❖ There is a good mixture of Home, European and International students
- ❖ 11 mentors supported 13 students in one to one work last year

Introduction

The Counselling Service exists to support student learning and personal development. Its role is to maximise students' potential to benefit from their University experience by offering quality short term counselling, developing and delivering appropriate workshops and training. In addition we have created P2P a student mentoring scheme. We work collaboratively with others to achieve this overall aim. This report includes key results, what we do, information on our contribution to Student Retention and Academic Success, Enhancing Student Employability, Supporting International students, Improving the Student Experience, Supporting Academic staff and Protecting the Reputation of the University. There is a collation of statistics on the work of the service this year, data from our quality audit system CORE, a summary of the evaluation exercise, a report on the P2P project and information about additional work. A brief account of Developments for 2012-2013 are summarised and goals for 2013-14 outlined.

What Does the Counselling Service Do?

- Supporting students with pre-existing mental health issues of whom there are increasing numbers due to inclusion of a range of mental health diagnoses under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- Supporting students who experience age- and stage-related psychological issues (e.g. leaving home, relationships; developing a stable identity)
- Supporting students who experience university study-related issues (e.g. exam anxiety, procrastination, failure, lack of attendance, considering leaving etc.). These are likely to be inter-linked with the point above, but may be important to separate out to create a more student-specific case;
- Supporting students in serious crisis and at risk (e.g. suicide, self-harm, attack, substance misuse-induced state);
- Preventing psychological crises through offering support to individuals and groups of students when a traumatic situation occurs at university (e.g. the suicide attempt of a peer in halls of residence)

The Counselling Service contributes significantly to:

Student Retention and Academic Achievement

Counselling has a positive impact on student retention and academic achievement. Psychological issues/mental health problems impact negatively on academic outcomes and that counselling interventions can moderate this. The relationship between retention and accessing in-house counselling: **In the students evaluation of their counselling experience with the service 67% said it helped them stay at University, 59% said it helped them do better on their course.**

Enhancing Student Employability

46 per cent of all student respondents indicated that counselling was either 'an important factor' (4) or 'the most significant factor' (5) in helping them develop skills useful for obtaining future employment. Another 30 per cent indicated that counselling was 'one of many factors' (3) that helped them develop skills useful for obtaining future employment.

Therefore in total 76% of students considered that counselling helped them develop skills useful for obtaining employment.

Activities which increase student employability are valuable. Employers' reports that even academically and technically able graduates are missing 3 categories of skill necessary for the workplace, one of which may arguably be developed through psycho-educational interventions delivered by counselling services. This category includes: self-awareness, emotional intelligence, personal values and motivation. We participate in developing workshops for student to improve self-reflective practice. The training and experience of P2P will also contribute to this. We also offer workshops on confidence, and dealing with stress.

Supporting International Students

Living in a new country and experiencing a different culture as an international student can be challenging and at times impair good mental health. We provide specific information for international students during their induction and via our Coming to Scotland to Study information booklet. Last year 17% of our clients were international students including E.U.

Improving the Student Experience

52% of all student respondents indicated that counselling was either 'an important factor' (4) or 'the most significant factor' (5) in improving their overall student experience. Another 33 %- indicated that counselling was one of many factors (3) that contributed to improving their overall student experience. **Therefore in total 85% of students considered counselling to have improved their overall experience of being at university.**

In the new situation in which fees will follow students rather than come direct to institutions, student satisfaction is likely to be paramount.

Quotes from student users of the counselling service to illustrate our contribution to improving the student experience:

"You're service transformed my life from suffering to enjoying life"

"I am back on track now to complete my course, worry free"

"She helped me to deal with difficult issues in my life. I felt emotionally supported and now I understand myself much better, I feel happier and more confident, able to cope with things, thanks to her help."

"Counsellor was absolutely fantastic in every way, if I didn't have her support and advice I don't think I would have continued at uni this year"

"If it wasn't for counselling, I'd have probably collapsed mentally under the strain of everything"

Supporting Academic Staff

The counselling service helps in supporting other university staff (academic and support staff) in dealing effectively and supportively with students' psycho-social problems. There is a relationship built up between the counselling service and other university staff such that university staff are able to ask for help in dealing with a student or to refer the student directly, simply and early on in the process. The counsellors' knowledge and understanding of the university systems and processes allows them to be particularly helpful to students with not only their psychological issues but also their academic ones. Early referral means that intervention can be offered before problems become serious and before they have a significant effect on academic performance, and that academic and administrative staff are freed up to use their time more appropriately on their substantive role.

Protecting the Reputation of the University

An important part of the work of the counselling service is in responding to crisis situations, in that it helps protect the university's reputation. This protection occurs via:

- distressed individuals receiving early help so that they are less likely to get to the point of acting out in a way dangerous to themselves or others;
- students affected by a traumatic event having somewhere to talk about their feelings/concerns and receive support, so that they feel less need to do this outside the university and thus worry their friends and family;
- in the event of a serious outcome (e.g. death of a student through suicide), the university being able to demonstrate to all stakeholders, its commitment to care of students through provision of an in-house service, regardless of whether the student chose to access it;
- because the counsellors are accredited by the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, there is external verification that

the service meets professional quality standards and is regulated by the profession.

Risk

We use the Risk questions from CORE to provide the basis for managing and containing risk.

These questions are: I have thought of hurting myself; I have hurt myself physically or taken dangerous risks with my health; I made plans to end my life; I have thought it would be better if I were dead; I have been physically violent to others; I have threatened or humiliated another person. These questions cover suicidal ideation, harm to self and others.

If any student scores 5 or more or 4 on any one item then the counsellor completes a risk form and discusses the client with the Senior Counsellor. Of those students who came for ongoing counselling 20% which equates to 45 students were deemed to be at risk. One of the aims of the counselling will be to reduce the risk. Also the client is supported to meet with their GP. For many students the Counselling and treatment by GP is sufficient to effectively manage the risk. For others a more comprehensive support package may be required involving Psychiatric services.

We have risk procedure in place to ensure we are protecting the students, and reducing reputational damage to the university. It also helps support the counsellors.

Statistics on Counselling Service

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Number of Clients	312	278	232	184

There has been a 11% increase in the number of clients accessing the service this year. This demonstrates a growing acceptance in the use of counselling to help students manage the difficulties they are experiencing. We see it as a demonstration of our value to the students of Abertay. We see just over 6% of the student population. Our numbers continue to rise. Our location in the Library has proved to make us more accessible to the majority of students.

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Number of Sessions	1328	1114	1023	973
On The Day Appointments	53	56	50	47

A continuous increase in the number of appointments over the last 4 years- this year a 16% upsurge.

There has been a steady use of On The Day Appointments this year, which is pleasing because we have worked hard to let staff know about this service. These are appointments bookable on the day to respond to a sense of crisis perceived by student or their referrer.

Number of Sessions per % of Clients	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
1	24	21	33	22
2	12	12	13	15
3-5	35	34	27	30
6-10	21	23	16	17
11+	8	10	11	16

71% of the students we see receive five or less appointments, this is similar to most university counselling services. Our overall goal is to support student learning and thus a focused and fast intervention to enable students to be successful at University comprises the majority of our work. The time at which a student decides that they need help is a key tipping point and an excellent opportunity to be an effective helper. This year 59 students contacted the service requesting appointments and subsequently did not attend.

Nationality (%)	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
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International (including EU)	18	16	17	15
UK	82	84	83	85

International students can be particularly vulnerable because of the loss of their home culture and lack of support.

Gender (%)	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Female	60	63	60	59
Male	39	37	40	41
Transgender	*			

* figure not given as too small to calculate percentage/may identify clients.

It is pleasing to see that significant numbers of males access the counselling service; it suggests we are accessible to men who have traditionally been seen as reluctant to use counselling. We are keen to offer a transsexual friendly service.

Type of Client (%)	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Undergraduate	91	90	87	83
Postgraduate	9	10	13	17

School (%)	2012/13		2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
AMG	12	CCT	23	26	26
CSC	10	CSC	10	17	14
DBS	9	DBS	10	10	11
SHS	55	SHS	57	47	49
SECAM	14				

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Disclosed Disability (%)	11	14	14	9

Approximately 5% of student body have declared a disability. It is likely that there is under reporting of student numbers with a disability because of the stigma associated with having a mental health disability.

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Average Days Total Wait for Appointment	7.0	6.6	5.9	5.5

In 2012/13 83% of students were seen within 2 working weeks of contacting the Counselling Service and requesting an appointment, of these 61% got an appointment within a week. It has helped that our receptionist texts clients to remind them of their first appointment. Some of the clients who waited longer were requesting a specific time or counsellor. We have made it one of our quality assurance targets to offer an appointment to all clients within 2 weeks of them contacting the service.

Presenting Issue at First Session (%)	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Abuse	*	4	4	*
Academic	16	15	16	21
Anxiety	25	25	31	32
Addictive Behaviours	*	*	*	3
Depression	19	23	18	18
Loss	8	4	5	3
Other Mental Health	*	*	3	*
Physical Health	*	*	*	*
Eating Disorders	*	*	*	*
Relationships	16	14	8	8
Self and Identity	4	*	*	4
Sexual Issues	*	*	*	*
Transitions	3	4	5	*
Welfare and Advice	*	*	*	*
Self-Harm	3	*	*	*

* figure not given as too small to calculate percentage/may identify clients.

These are presenting issues, that concern that seems most important when the student contacts the Counselling Service, other issues emerge in the course of the work.

The four most important presenting issues are Anxiety, Depression, Academic and Relationships.. There is a clear trend for numbers with anxiety to rise each year. We have produced a new booklet Stress: how to manage things better, on improving ways of dealing with stress.

Client Evaluation

In 2012-1 we had 54 responses to our survey; this is a response rate of 19%. I have added my comments and have included some of the students own qualitative remarks.

1. Did anyone suggest you came for counselling?

61% were advised to seek counselling the most important being university staff then friends and then their GP.

2. How did you know about the counselling service?

The most important was the web site, tutor, induction then friends and leaflet. It is clear that a wide variety of sources are needed to reach everyone and that the web is increasing in significance as a means of contact.

3. How did you make your first appointment?

The majority use email to book the appointment a quarter come into student services personally to do it.

4. Was your first appointment soon enough?

Yes: 92.59% (50) No: 7.41% (4)

WE aim to offer an appointment to all clients within 2 weeks of them requesting an appointment.

5. Were you happy with

The booking system: Yes: 100.00% (54) No: 0.00% (0)

The waiting area: Yes: 96.30% (52) No: 1.85% (1) Not answered: 1.85% (1)

The counselling room: Yes: 98.15% (53) No: 0.00% (0) Not answered: 1.85% (1)

We have an excellent receptionist who responds well to students requesting appointments.. There is some uncomfortableness for some clients in accessing our service they feel very self conscious because we are in the library and the waiting area is for all students who have appointments with Student Services. This is unfortunate for some of the students however our numbers have increased since we re-located to the library which suggest that for most this has made us more accessible.

6. What brought you to counselling ?

Concerns about my:

Experience of abuse	11.11%	6
Course of study	33.33%	18
Anxiety	62.96%	34
Health	11.11%	6
Eating disorder	*%	*
Behaviour being too compulsive or obsessive	7.41%	4
Depression, mood changes, thoughts of ending things	57.41%	31
Loss of someone or something that was important to me	25.93%	14
Behaviour or thoughts being regarded as odd or harmful by other people	5.56%	3
Relationships	33.33%	18
Low opinion of myself/lack of confidence	53.70%	29
Sexual difficulties	*%	*
Changes in my life	29.63%	16
Welfare problems (money, housing)	*%	*
Self harm	11.11%	6
Other concerns	5.56%	3

* figure not given as too small to calculate percentage/may identify clients.

These are presenting issues, the concern that seems most important when the student contacts the Counselling Service other issues emerge in the

course of the work. The four most important presenting issues are Anxiety, Depression, Academic and low opinion of myself/lack of confidence,. There is a clear trend for numbers with anxiety to rise each year. We have produced a new booklet Stress: how to manage things better, on improving ways of dealing with stress.

7. In what ways do you think your counsellor has helped you?

1. In listening to me	98.15%	53
2. In understanding how I was feeling	85.19%	46
3. In understanding what my situation was	68.52%	37
4. In giving me useful information	66.67%	36
5. In helping me explore my concerns	88.89%	48
6. In helping me re-think how I do things	72.22%	39
7. In arranging for me to meet other staff	5.56%	3
8. In referring me to another service	16.67%	9
9. In another way	0.00%	0
10. The counsellor has not helped me	0.00%	0

Retention

8. *To what extent would you say that counselling has helped you to stay at college/university?*

41 per cent of all student respondents indicated that counselling was either 'an important factor' (4) or 'the most significant factor' (5) in helping them stay on at university.

Another 26 per cent indicated that counselling was one of many factors (3) that helped them stay on at university.

Therefore in total 67%% of students considered that counselling to have helped them stay at university

Achievement

9. *To what extent would you say that counselling has helped you do better in your academic work?*

39 per cent of all student respondents indicated that counselling was either 'an important factor' (4) or 'the most significant factor' (5) in helping them do better in their academic work. Another 20 per cent indicated that counselling was one of many factors (3) that helped them do better in their academic work.

Therefore in total 59% of students considered counselling to have helped them do better in their academic work

Student Experience

10. *To what extent would you say that counselling has improved your overall experience of college/university?*

48 per cent of all student respondents indicated that counselling was either 'an important factor' (4) or 'the most significant factor' (5) in improving their overall student experience.

Another 35 per cent indicated that counselling was one of many factors (3) that contributed to improving their overall student experience.

Therefore in total 83% of students considered counselling to have improved their overall experience of being at university.

Employability

11. *To what extent would you say counselling has helped you develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment?*

46 per cent of all student respondents indicated that counselling was either 'an important factor' (4) or 'the most significant factor' (5) in helping them develop skills useful for obtaining future employment. Another 30 per cent indicated that counselling was 'one of many factors' (3) that helped them develop skills useful for obtaining future employment.

Therefore in total 76% of students considered that counselling helped them develop skills useful for obtaining employment.

12. Please describe in more details the ways in which counselling helped you:

I have given few of the examples

1. It gave me confirmation that I was in a horrible situation as nobody else around me seemed to notice. It provided somebody to listen and I didn't need to fear what I did and didn't say. It provided somebody to take the time to actually see things from MY point of view.
2. I had a feeling that she really understood me and was there when needed. Also, she believed in me when I didn't.
3. Helped me to understand my feelings/emotions in a more positive way. Challenged my thoughts. Was a very positive experience that helped me to enjoy my Uni experience. I have a very busy life and counselling helped me through this very busy time to embrace the challenges I face/faced.
4. I feel better about myself as a person, and realise that not everything bad that happens is directly my fault. I've learnt to deal with things in a positive way without over-thinking or getting so caught up with a problem that I can't concentrate on anything else.
5. I have obtained a mental toolbox to help in my understanding of my feelings and anxiety.
6. Counselling was a way of opening up and talking about everything without having to worry about who I was talking to. It was a place I could speak about things that I wouldn't have anyone else to speak to about. It helped me understand my thoughts and feelings and think about things in a more positive way. I have definitely gained a lot of confidence through the service and I feel overall more happy and satisfied with life.

7. The counselling helped me because she understood what was my problem, gave me space and empathy to explore what I needed and what was really wrong. She gave me information that was the most helpful information here and gave me the feeling that she understand my feelings, thoughts and situation. Even if it wasn't her area to work she didn't complain but listened and gave advice and let me re-think what I still have and think I need. She included me and my experience in her advices.
8. I was able to discuss deeply buried family issues which allowed me to get more in touch with my feelings and emotions and see family patterns which are not helpful to me. I felt my counsellor really listened to me and was supportive.
9. Being away from my friends and family back home, it has been very liberating and relieving to get a chance to talk about more private issues and personal feelings that I'm not comfortable discussing with my friends from university.
10. My counsellor was good at giving the relevant information and pointing me in the right direction for more support. She ended up being an important person I would look forward to seeing when I had scheduled appointments. How wonderful, I'm glad she helped me see sense, helped me to be assertive and slightly confident about myself.
11. **14. Would you recommend this counselling service to a friend?**

Yes: 98.11% (52)

No: 1.89% (1)

Not answered: *% (*)

* figure not given as too small to calculate percentage/may identify clients.

This is a very pleasing endorsement of the work of the Counsellors.

P2P Peer mentoring scheme to support students studying at Abertay

The peer mentoring scheme to support new students through the process of settling into life at University is now in its third year. In February/March of the previous academic year we managed to recruit and train 10 new mentors (bringing us to a total of 14), who were then able to take on the duties of the role over this academic year. The interest in the scheme has grown phenomenally since our small beginnings and we have been able to recruit another 33 new mentors who have completed the preparatory training. This academic year we have offered two separate training programmes to accommodate the increase in numbers.

The scheme has grown from the initial pilot within SHS and DBS, with all the schools potentially involved. The 14 mentors were an integral part of the

orientation programme. Direct entrants in SHS, DBS, AMG and SECAM were all allocated a mentor prior to starting at university, and the mentors facilitated groups with these students during orientation, to address some of the questions, issues and concerns the new students might have about starting university. The mentors were available to be contacted if concerns arose later in the semester. This next academic year we will be in the position to offer every new student a mentor during orientation.

The mentors were also involved in 'Conversation Nation' – a project to link International Students with established students to help with their language skills and general integration into university life in Scotland.

Referrals for one to one support for students who were having particular difficulties in settling into university have increased significantly since the first year of the scheme, 11 mentors supported 13 students. Referrals have come from Disability Services, EIS services (English for International Students), and of students being seen in the Counselling Service.

Mentors attend supervision groups on a termly basis to reflect on any issues that arise in their roles as mentors, and have access to individual consultation with counsellors in the Counselling Service should urgent issues arise at other times. During this academic year we have made particular efforts to recruit mentors from AMG and SECAM whose students have been under-represented, so that we can offer mentors within each school. We attended a number of meetings in students academic calendar to promote the service and contacted all class representatives in these schools to encourage participation. This has resulted in us recruiting 5 students from AMG for the next academic year.

Over the academic year we have developed the profile of the scheme so that awareness of its existence becomes more widespread. We have produced posters for students who may want to have a mentor, as well as posters for students who may want to join the scheme. We have set up and developed a website on the student portal, that has information for students and staff about the scheme, including a number of video clips about the scheme which involved two of the student mentors. We hope to build on this next year and have some clips of mentees talking about their experience of the scheme.

Associate Counsellor

This year we introduced the Associate scheme, this provides an opportunity for a graduate of Abertay's Diploma in Counselling who has completed their training to further their development by counselling clients of the Counselling Service and becoming part of a counselling team..

Workshops

'Mind the Gap – starting and settling into University'

Workshop as part of orientation for new students

13th Sept (approximately) 30 students

Reflective Practice (session 1 and 2) Food Science students

11th October

Approximately 25 students

18th October

Approximately 25 students

These sessions were introduced as part of the curriculum for the Food Science students in preparation for their practice placements. Part of their assessment process for this involves them keeping a Log of their experience and demonstrating their ability to learn by Reflective Practice. In the past students had often been confused about the purpose of the log and what and how to record. These sessions aimed to give students an overview of the general principles of reflective practice and using examples to see what this would mean in practice.

The sessions were part of a collaborative package, with the Careers Service relating the importance of reflective practice to their career prospects, and the tutor looking at the specifics of the logbook and learning outcomes.

Reflective Practice Session (Principal's Award)

3rd September

Co-facilitation with Careers Service

This session was a condensed version of what was offered to the Food Science students, as part of the training programme for the students enrolled on the Principal's Award scheme. Again these students are required to keep a Reflective Log of their learning and development on the scheme.

Introduction to Counselling and the Counselling Service (Business School)

Finance, Business and Marketing Students (yr 2)

31st October 80 students

Accounting and Finance (yr 3)

3rd November

Approximately 50 students

Development Plans for 2012-2013

Increase the awareness of P2P within the University..

Build P2P so that we can offer a mentor to all new students 2012-13.

Speak to groups of students in Contemporary Science, SECAM and AMG in order to increase the number of mentors from those schools from new intake in 2012-2013.

Increase awareness of befriending role of P2P and improve referrals

Continue to support Principals award by providing workshops on Reflective Practice.

Devise a pilot for a workshop on mindfulness for students.

Monitor the number of students we assess as being at risk.

Visit each School Office and offer self help materials and bibliotherapy to them so that they can distribute them to students who they believe may benefit from them.

Produce useful information in the form of a booklet, for staff and students on responding to grief and bereavement.

How Did We Do?

P2P

We trained sufficient mentors to offer one to all new undergraduate students to the University for 2013-14. This is partly due to the work we did in publicising the scheme and doing presentations on it to different classes –big thanks to SECAM.

We have a site on the University's portal which shows that each School has a pool of mentors. There are 38 mentors currently.

11 mentors did one to one support work with 13 students during the academic year. Several of them participated in Conversation Nation a project with Dundee University and Dundee college to improve International students conversational English. We have linked all the new mentors with a more experienced senior mentor.

Workshops

We continued to support Reflective Practice for students, a pilot for mindfulness now exists.

Self Help Material

A new publication on Grief and Bereavement was written and distributed; another edition of the basic guide to the Counselling Service was produced. We visited all the School Offices and they now stock some of our self-help material as well as the basic guide to the Counselling Service

Development Plans 2013-14

Referring on students at risk

Next year as a team task we are going to collate our experiences of referring student on via their GP to MH service. This will be done via team meeting then we may write about this to NHS in Tayside once we have the data.

To produce a leaflet on self harm

P2P

We need to evaluate the mentees experience of mentors.

To link senior mentors with new mentors

Develop the service for post grads

Review Training in light of last years two different models.

Put together a presentation on P2P

Mindfulness

There will be 2 taster sessions in first semester and then a group if there is enough interest. [REDACTED] will be delivering this from sports centre.

Resource Information

Review the current one and bring it up to date.

Collaborative Working with LGBT group and Student Association

To provide a joint leaflet about support for this group within the university.

Review Bibliotherapy and add more details regarding Mindfulness.