

Dubai College Counselling Policy

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1. Introduction

Dubai College values the importance of addressing the emotional, social and behavioural needs of all students within its care. The counselling department aims to meet this purpose and to promote wellbeing as a foundation for future success.

2. Definition of Counselling

Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting. Counselling aims to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps a dissatisfaction with life, or a loss of a sense of direction or purpose. It is usually at the request of the client. The client can be a student, teacher or staff member, with the primary goal being to enhance wellbeing.

3. The Role of the School Counsellor

Counsellors are student advocates who work in partnership with students, parents and staff to foster an inclusive and collaborative school environment. They are responsible for the implementation of a comprehensive counselling programme which includes competencies leading to lifelong success, including personal and social growth. The overall goal is to provide all students the opportunity to achieve their best. The School Counsellor will support the developmental, emotional and social needs of the student body to promote wellbeing and success.

Dubai College counselling services are available to all members of the school community. The role of the Counsellor is to:

- Implement effective student and staff support. This includes understanding self and others, coping strategies, peer relationships and social skills, communication problems solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills.
- Provide individual and small group counselling to deal with social, emotional and mental health.
- Assist parents and the school community with information regarding mental health issues and challenges.
- Work proactively with the school community to promote and foster student wellbeing.

4. Referral Process

Referral to access the counselling service can be made at any time by teachers, parents, outside agencies or students who self-refer. Students have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time, and it is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure that the student's right to autonomy is respected. It is important to recognise that students can only benefit if they want to be involved in the counselling process.

Referrals to consult a School Counsellor should be made through the appropriate referral form.

Appointments are to be timetabled during free periods, Directed Study periods, break times, as well as, before and after school. In crisis situations students can access counselling during academic class time, however, this is rare and to be avoided whenever possible.

4.1 Involuntary Referrals

The pastoral teams at Dubai College sometimes make decisions to refer students to counselling against their wishes or without their permission due to their actions or behaviours at school. Students may have been internally or externally suspended or face other behaviour consequences. The affected students are expected to see the school counsellor for therapy as fulfilling the disciplinary conditions served by the pastoral teams. When these cases occur, the student is expected to see the counsellor for a one-off involuntary session, and it is then left open for the student to initiate another session with the school counsellor.

4.2 Session Allocation

Appointments are made subject to availability and to urgency. Sessions will generally be weekly, fortnightly or monthly, depending on the need, usually for a maximum of 12 sessions. Any extension to this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

A student's right to privacy and confidentiality is the basis for an effective counselling relationship. They are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the student's autonomy.

The counsellor is not required to pass on information about a student breaking a school rule or committing an offense, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime.

Staff members working directly with the student may be aware that a student is having counselling, but they will not be informed of the content of counselling sessions, unless the counsellor, student and/or parents deem it necessary to do so.

5.1. Breaching Confidentiality

The school counsellor will discuss the possibility of breach of confidentiality at the outset of counselling and again if the need arises during the counselling relationship. A need to breach confidentiality may happen when the student, or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm. Where possible, the counsellor will keep the young person informed and involved in the process of gaining assistance from others.

5.2. Child Protection and Safeguarding

The counselling service will refer to the Dubai College Safeguarding Policy if a student confides that they, or another young person, is being abused (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or through neglect).

5.3. Court or other Legal Proceedings

Those within the counselling service at Dubai College will not engage in any psycho-legal work or perform psychometric assessments for legal purposes.

5.4. Sharing Information with Other Stakeholders

The counselling service at Dubai College works in a multi-disciplinary way. When a student is accessing support from an external provider, the counsellor may need to provide and receive information from these providers. This should only happen with the student's or parents' written permission.

6. Supervision

All Counsellors are required to engage in regular external clinical supervision to maintain and monitor standards and to comply with their ethical code. School Counsellors should undertake counselling supervision with an accredited supervisor who has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting. Counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision and Dubai College will pay the supervision fees.

7. Staff Development and Training

All staff in the counselling department are encouraged to pursue ongoing professional training and development as outlined by their regulatory body.

8. Record Keeping

- It is necessary to carefully track and monitor the numbers of sessions required, and to look for patterns of need. The need for confidentiality is to be balanced with safeguarding concerns, and the best interests of the student will be at the centre of all decisions. At the first session confidentiality is explained along with safeguarding.
- All students to be added to CPOMS (safeguarding software) when they start counselling, and when they stop. Only DSL and DDSL can see this. For non-safeguarding cases only a brief reason for counselling is needed eg. Bullying, anxiety, exam stress. Safeguarding issues will be dealt with according to the Dubai College Safeguarding policy.
- All students who use the counselling service will be added to shared Dept spreadsheet, which can be seen by counsellors and DSL / DDSL only. This is to ensure an even balance between counsellors and to keep track of session numbers.
- Form Tutors and Heads of Year/ Heads of Section are central to pastoral care at Dubai College and should be kept informed where possible. This should be a student-centred decision.
- We do not ask for parental permission for students to access the school counsellors at Dubai College but will always follow safeguarding procedures which may involve parental involvement.
- We do not keep a central record of staff who access counselling. Dubai College Staff who come for counselling are supported in accessing longer term counselling through school insurance, where appropriate.
- Counsellors will keep personal records of staff and student sessions attended (and not attended).

8 Supporting Policies and Documentation

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Suicide Safety policy
- Bereavement policy
- SEND Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

The Counselling policy is monitored by SLT and reviewed on an annual basis.

Policy Details	
Version date	September 2025
Last review	October 2024, Cindy Penney
Next review	September 2026
Responsible SLT	Deputy Head: Pastoral & DSL