



STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2004 – 2005

31 BUCCLEUCH PLACE, EDINBURGH EH8 9JS TEL:0131 650 4170

Summary of key points relating to our student users

- 831 students attended the Service for counselling and workshops.
- 49 more students than last year come for counselling.
- 87% received an initial appointment within a week.
- At the beginning of Summer term we had 90 students waiting for ongoing counselling
- The average number of sessions was 4.2.
- Highest proportion of users came from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, but the other Colleges were not far behind.
- The proportion of final HSS and SE students to 1st year was 4:1.
- Women still significantly outnumber men by 7:3.
- The proportion of overseas students coming for counselling continued to increase from 89 to 112.
- Overseas students require more counselling sessions.
- Academic difficulties account for 18% of the presenting problems compared to 10% last year.
- In a sample of 71 students researched by the Service, 76% improved following treatment.
- Our new workshop on Procrastination was so popular, we ran three additional ones.

Student Counselling Service

Annual Report 2004-2005

Introduction

It seems helpful to introduce this annual report by making an introduction to the service itself and how it works now that we report to a different committee, the Senatus Quality Assessment and Enhancement Committee.

Aims and objectives of the service

The mission of the University of Edinburgh is the advancement of knowledge and understanding. As a leading international centre of academic excellence, the University has as its core mission:

- to sustain and develop its position as a research and teaching institution of the highest international quality and to benchmark its performance against world-class standards;
- to provide an outstanding educational environment, supporting study across a broad range of academic disciplines and serving the major professions;
- to produce graduates equipped for high personal and professional achievement; and
- to contribute to society, promoting health, economic and cultural well being.

In furthering this mission, the University sees and supports the need for an embedded Student Counselling Service. The remit of the Service is to contribute

to the enhancement of student experience by promoting and encouraging good mental health and well-being and supporting students to reach their academic potential.

In fulfilling this remit the primary aim of the Student Counselling Service is to provide a free confidential short term counselling service to matriculated students of Edinburgh University.

How the service works

The Service is discretely positioned in a shared stair with other academic departments thus ensuring the privacy of those coming for counselling. The majority of students self refer for counselling by phoning, emailing or coming in where they are offered a brief 30 minute initial appointment within five working days. Before this interview students complete a CORE evaluation form assessing risk, functioning and wellbeing. During the interview the counsellor assesses the students presenting problem and a joint decision is reached as to the appropriateness of counselling. If the situation appears urgent then a plan of action is made with the student perhaps leading them to attend the GP or contact their DOS. Where we are concerned about a student and consider them at risk we would offer them immediate counselling effectively putting them to the top of the waiting list. Many students come at the suggestion of their GP or DOS. We do not offer an appointment unless we are sure the student themselves wishes it. The initial interview is both to enable us to triage the student but also to check out with them that they are happy to come. There can still be a perceived stigma about coming for professional counselling help or an ambivalence about asking for help. Some are anxious that their academic record might be adversely affected but are reassured by our strict code of confidentiality. Once accepted for counselling, students then get allocated a counsellor and are offered short term counselling i.e. 4-6 one hour sessions. Our current average is just over 4. Some students require longer counselling. If this is obvious from the start we would suggest that they attend private counselling or go to one of the voluntary agencies. We do provide longer counselling in some instances such as with International students, mature students or post graduate students. Demand on the service means we can only offer this at quieter times of the year such as the summer vacation.

In addition to our individual counselling we offer a workshop programme. This developed out of a recognition of similar issues arising in individual work such as low self esteem. Workshops allow for more potential growth for students in these areas. Staff of the service also recognised the increasing problems of procrastination which affect academic progression. The workshop looking at this particular problem is run jointly with the Study Development Adviser and recognises both the emotional and the organisational problems involved. This workshop particularly draws students who have not attended the service and also tends to have a higher proportion of male students than attend the service.

We provide consultancy for staff dealing with students, training for staff such as new members of the teaching staff and DOS inductions as well as inductions for student groups such as the mature students forum. We also talk to student's parents while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Members of the team are involved in other development work both within the university such as the Disability committee and its mental health sub group and outwith such as the CORE research users group and the UniversitiesUK Committee for the Promotion of mental Wellbeing in HE.

Semesterisation

There will clearly be other evaluations of how changing to semesters has affected the university. In the Service we have been aware of some teething difficulties and managing change for the students. With the shorter summer vacation followed by the first long semester we observed high stress levels amongst the students. The taught academic year is now within a shorter time period and it will take some time for both students and staff to adjust to this. Just as the Colleges are learning about when to time assignment deadlines and exams we are making changes to when we schedule our workshop programme and what are likely to be our busiest weeks. It may take some time for the trends to become apparent. We were concerned as some students seemed to have very little or no time to revise for degree exams at the end of semester one. This caused immense stress but I am glad to say that academic staff were acutely aware of this, and have been evaluating the effect.

All the information about our service can be found on www.student-counselling.ed.ac.uk

Use of the Service

We continue to see a rise in numbers of students coming for counselling. Attendance at our workshops has fallen slightly from last year but we think this is to do with the different work schedules as a result of semesterisation.

The rise in numbers using the service for counselling mirrors the rise in students numbers with us seeing 3.6% of the total student population. This tends to compare well with national statistics for 'old universities' in the UK. The most recent comparative figure was an average of 2.9% of the student population for the UK in 2002/03 when we saw 3.6% (The Annual Survey of Counselling in Further and Higher Education, The Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, www.aucc.uk.com)

The proportion of males to females has risen slightly to 35% male to 65% female from last years 30% :70%. Male students are consistently underrepresented in counselling services. UK figures from 1999 show very similar ratios -35%: 65%, 33%:67% in 2002. This user group is also underrepresented in other counselling agencies and illustrates the cultural aspects of coming for counselling. However we do try to encourage male students to come both in our publicity (portraying photos of male students) having male counsellors and offering a service on the KB campus. It would appear that our procrastination workshop in particular with its practical approach attracts a higher proportion of men. Of 69 students attending this particular workshop 31 were men (ratio 45%:55%) This ratio would have been higher if they had all turned up!

The average number of session attended by students has decreased steadily over the years from 5.6 in 1992-93, and 4.6 in 1997-98. This is both a demonstration of the experience of the counselling staff and an indication of the pressures of the waiting list. Our CORE findings (see Appendix) continue to show us that there is effective change for over 70% of students who use the service so this demonstrates that there is not a loss to the quality of the service.

Year	FTE Counsellors	Students Seen for counselling	Interviews Given	Average No of Interviews	University Population
2002-03	5.48	754	3581	4.7	20861
2003-04	4.48	790	3291	4.2	22363
2004-05	5.5	828	3379	4.09	23111

Table 1: Comparison of numbers of FTE counsellors, numbers of students using the Student Counselling Service and the total University population over the previous and current year.

Profile of Users

Table 3 below shows the numbers of students who attend for counselling and for workshops (many attend both) and the few students who booked an appointment but did not attend.(11). The spread follows last years tend (figures in brackets) with minor variations such as in the college of Science and Engineering. There was a reduction in numbers referring from 2nd year and a slight increase in 3d and 4th year. This may have no significance and be random or it might be a slight indication of the changing academic pressures.

The greatest impact for the service in particular has been the increase in actual numbers, rather than proportion, of post graduates using the service. Post graduates tend to require more counselling sessions, partly from there being a high proportion of international students partly due to more life history and partly from the difficulties of sustaining a prolonged piece of academic work sometimes with very limited support systems in place.

College	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Total u/g	Total p/g	Total	%*
HSS	58(45)	109(112)	112(97)	156(155)	3	438(409)	132(110)	570(519)	66
MVM	10(5)	13(12)	11(11)	5(23)	12(14)	51(65)	26(17)	77(82)	9
SE	8(11)	29(47)	51(44)	78(74)	8(1)	174	48(53)	222(230)	25
Totals	76(61)	151(171)	174(152)	239(252)	23(15)	663(651)	206(180)	869(831)	

HSS = Humanities and Social Sciences, MVM = Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, SE = Science and Engineering

*% = percentage of the total students seen by the Service

2003/04 figures in brackets

Table 2: Numbers of Students by College

Response Times

	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	3+ weeks
Term 1	96	3	1 (0)	
Term 2	82	15	2 (1)	1 (2)
Term 3	84	14	1 (1)	1 (2)
Year Overall	87	11	1 (1)	1 (1)

Last year's figures in brackets (figures rounded to nearest whole number)

Table 3: Length of Wait for Assessment in % of Students

This year we had to operate the largest waiting list ever in the history of the Service. Table 5 shows that students had to wait for counselling significantly

longer than the year before. Both years have been unusual however. There was a drop in demand for counselling in 2002/3 (against the trend). This year demand rose again but the department was affected by the sudden serious illness of our co-director just before the beginning of the academic year. A temporary locum was appointed but they too became ill and were eventually unable to return.

We are also victims of our own success in being able to contain those on the waiting list. All but 4 students who requested counselling attended despite 53% in the summer term having to wait for more than 3 weeks.

It would also seem that demand increased towards Easter and the beginning of the summer term. However with semesterisation and evidence from other universities similarly organised it seems unlikely that we can predict a similar trend in this coming year.

	1 week %	2 weeks %	3 weeks %	3+ weeks %
Term 1	55 (45)	30 (36)	7 (14)	8 (5)
Term 2	25 (43)	22 (26)	25(8)	28 (23)
Term 3	22 (51)	8 (33)	17(4)	53 (12)
Year Overall	34 (46)	20 (32)	16 (9)	30 (13)

Last year's figures in brackets

Table 5: Length of Wait for Counselling in % of Students

Presenting Issues

This year I have included the whole table of what difficulties students present with as we are often asked what the main issues are for students. Again the most common reason for referral is depression and anxiety. As our research shows many students are within a clinical measure of distress with the consequent impact on their academic work. This year the percentage of those presenting with academic difficulties has increased from 10% to nearly 18%. Self-harm which has had increasing media coverage is still relatively rare but sometimes is not disclosed.

Difficulty	No of students	
	Presenting	Emerging
Abuse	25	12
Academic	124	14
Addictive behaviours	3	
Anxiety	137	41
Depression	139	50
Eating Disorders	17	2
Loss	63	22
Other mental Health problems	11	5
Physical Health	6	2
Relationships	98	43
Self and Identity	46	37
Self Harm	11	
Sexual Issues	7	
Transitions	18	4
Total	*705	232(33%)

Table 6: Presenting Issues

*omits students who started ongoing counselling in the previous academic year.

Severity	Presenting	Emerging
1	2	37
2	13	60
3	127	72
4	282	21
5	190	5
6	68	0
7	7	0
Total	689	195(28%)

Table 7: Severity ratings for students presenting and emerging from counselling

	No of Students
Blind/Partially sighted	1
Deaf/Hearing impairment	1
Dyslexia	25
Mental Health Difficulties	2
Multiple disabilities	4
None	488
Other disability	7
Unseen disability	10

Table 8: Number of students presenting with disclosed disabilities.

We triage every student and give them a severity rating according to their functioning and mood. Most fall in the mid ranges but 7 were graded at the most severe end suggesting that we considered them unable to function, to be overwhelmed and to have suicidal ideation. We now monitor those with disclosed disabilities. We have completed our DDA audit of our service and put all the necessary changes in place this year.

Clinical Effectiveness of Edinburgh University Counselling Service

Introduction of the CORE Clinical Evaluation System

Counselling in the past has suffered from a lack of robust quantitative data re proof of clinical effectiveness. As counselling moves into institutional settings particularly the NHS the requirement for valid effectiveness measures and the means both technical and financial to deliver these measures have been prioritised to meet clinical governance standards. As a result the CORE measure (See appendix 1) is now used by 300 services – 70% of these are within the NHS including psychiatric & psychology departments and in primary care trusts. Thus we now have the means not only to evaluate counselling with the same rigour as other mental health treatment providers we can also measure that performance on a level playing field with the other mental health disciplines.

The core measure is now entering the higher education field. It is used by some universities south of the border. The University of Edinburgh is leading the way in this area in Scotland. We have just completed our trial year. As a result of this pilot the service will widen its coverage of CORE to produce a full report from an increased research population in this coming academic year.

The pilot figures from a sample of 71 students attending the service tell us that:

- 76% of these students improved following treatment.
- 60% (40 students) of those presenting in the clinical left the service following treatment in the non-clinical range.
- Only 12% (8 students) did not move from the clinical to non-clinical bracket.

Marc Richelieu

Workshops programme

This year has been the first year of our new Workshop Programme for students. Instead of running weekly groups on self-development we changed to offering self-contained three-hour Workshops. This had the benefit of providing the input, group discussion and support that students value, in one 'bite'. The Workshops provided were 'Confidence Building', 'Stress and Relaxation' and 'Procrastination'. The most popular and newest addition has been the Workshop on 'Procrastination' run in conjunction with the Study Advisor Velda McCune. A total of 62 students have participated in this very successful and pertinent Workshop. Other universities have shown a keen interest in this initiative and as a consequence we have been asked to run a Workshop for them to demonstrate the material that we use. Our Workshops in 'Confidence Building' and 'Stress and Relaxation' have attracted increased numbers from previous years.

We feel convinced that our new programme meets the need for student self-development far more effectively. In total 124 students have used the Workshops this year and as has been mentioned under International Students, we are also running for the first time an orientation Workshop.

Maira Tattersall Workshop co-ordinator

International Students

As the numbers of International Students are likely to keep rising we held a forum to ascertain what issues they felt the Student Counselling Service could provide support with, and also what awareness and understanding they had of what we do. The findings from this event indicated that we needed to raise our profile and clarify what counselling was. To this end we have published a leaflet (Appendix 2) on the Service specifically aimed at International Students, including a section for them on our Website and improved links to other relevant websites. What also became clear was that many felt that an orientation type workshop in the first semester would be helpful to explore the issues regarding the transition to a new culture. The first of these workshops will be held in October with a further one planned for late January.

Maira Tattersall, Cathy Smyth Iola Wilson

Progress since the last annual report

Quality Assurance Issues

1 Service Accreditation

As a team we are very committed to high and improving standards both in professional counselling terms and also in service delivery. The summer has been spent preparing for the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Service Accreditation Scheme which 'sets the standard to which all counselling service should aspire'.

www.bacp.co.uk

This scheme lays out that a service requires aims and objectives, policies on publicity, staffing, clinical responsibility, equal opportunities, evaluation, health and safety good administration and management, suitable accommodation and professional conduct.

Our aim is to submit our application by the beginning of November. We would like to thank Alan Percy of Oxford University for his invaluable guidance in this task.

2 CORE

We continue to use CORE, which we consider to be the best way of measuring the effectiveness of counselling and also in helping us triage students, so that they get the most appropriate best service. This measure also helps us as counsellors to give a more effective service for different client groups. See Appendix 1

www.....

3 Workshops

All our workshops are evaluated by those attending and these evaluations are discussed by the organisers each semester and agreed changes made.

4 We intend to reintroduce our satisfaction survey for individual counselling from September 2005 as part of service accreditation requirements.

5 Staff were given a questionnaire for them to review the year from a personal viewpoint and all but sessional staff attended 2 days of review and strategic planning

Other developments within the service

Mental Health of Students

We continue to work on improving services for students with continuing mental health problems. We are increasingly aware that students suffering from chronic disorders need more support than we can give and also that the support needed is not necessarily counselling. We think, in discussion with other student support services, and with our own students using the service ;that we have identified some gaps in provision. The service was given additional funding to explore this area further and I and a colleague, Moira Tattersall have researched what other universities offer. This brief research project will be available at the beginning of November. We will make some recommendations, which we hope will eventually improve this situation and aid these students academic progress.

International Student workshop

In view of the increasing numbers of international Students using the service and in response to a focus meeting last academic year we decided to provide a cultural adjustment workshop. This was such a success that another was offered at the start of semester 2. There was not enough uptake however so we are reviewing the timing of these events.

Staffing

Craig McDevitt who was director of the service for 10 years then Co-director for 5 years took medical retirement in February. His retirement was marked by a reception and presentation by the University Secretary in honour of the contribution Craig had made to the Service specifically and the University generally. Craig also rose to prominence as chair of our professional body BACP and continues to be involved with the association. He is greatly missed. (Retirement spiel in Edit?)

www.ed.ac.uk

Three new members of staff have been appointed in the current academic year; Irene Smith receptionist, Barbara Malinen and Mary Stack counsellors.

Susie Jackson
Director
October 2005

Members of Staff

Counselling Team

Craig McDevitt (retired 28.2.05)
Susie Jackson Director
Barbara Malinen (from March)
Ronnie Millar
Marc Richelieu
Cathy Smyth
Mary Stack (from May)
Moirra Tattersall
Chris Walker
Iola Wilson

Sessional Counsellors

Maggie Coombs
Graham Lamont (from January)
Barbara Malinen (Until March)
Ali McBride-Thorpe

Administration

Meg Stroud	Senior Administrator
Irene Smith	
Angie Robertson	Moray House

Careers

Pam Mason	Kings Buildings
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Interns

Yolanda Strachan	Gestalt Institute
Kurt Dunkel	Shippensburg University, USA
Aisling Gallagher	Royal Bank of Scotland

Appendix 1

The CORE System

In 1995, a multidisciplinary group of researchers and practitioners, representing psychiatry, psychotherapy, clinical psychology, and counselling, embarked on a national collaboration with service practitioners and managers. The aim was to design the first UK quality evaluation system for use across primary, secondary and tertiary NHS provision. The system was launched at a conference supported by the Department of Health in 1998, and has over 300 registered service users, of which 70 per cent are within the NHS and include specialist psychiatric services, clinical psychology departments, primary care mental health units and individual general practices. Full information can be found at the CORE web site and includes references for a series of publications that address the rationale, content, design process, and ultimate scientific and policy development utility of the system.

Components of the CORE System

The CORE System comprises three tools:

- 1) The CORE Outcome Measure is a patient self-report questionnaire which assesses the psychosocial domains of subjective well-being (4 items), symptoms (12 items), and life/social functioning (12 items). In addition, there are 4 items on risk to self, and others (2 items), included as clinical flags, which may trigger further discussion with patients. The prime goal of the Outcome Measure is to provide practitioners with a global index of 'distress', which may be compared with benchmark data collected for UK clinical and non-clinical populations. The measure has been extensively piloted and appears to be valid and reliable in measuring post-therapy change, clearly distinguishing between clinical (in-therapy) and non-clinical (general) populations. As the measure is both brief (single sheet of paper) and user-friendly (measured reading-ease), its acceptability to practitioners and patients is high. It provides very useful clinical data to aid appropriate intervention, assist professional development, and help quantify service effectiveness.
- 2) The CORE Therapy Assessment and End of Therapy Forms are completed by every practitioner for every patient at the beginning and end of therapy. The forms provide comprehensive profiling of each patient alongside contextual detail for CORE System Outcome (effectiveness) data.

- 3) The CORE Administration Checklist helps practitioners audit the administration, completion, and collection of CORE System tools, and provides feedback to users on data representativeness and any associated implementation problems.

Range of support services complementing the CORE system

The Psychological Therapies Research Centre (_PTRC) at the University of Leeds provides a range of support services to help service practitioners implement, and gain the maximum yield from, the CORE System. Information packs are provided free of charge and contain copies of all CORE System tools along with details of the support services, which include on-site workshops, and comprehensive data analysis and reporting services, to help meet the requirements of clinical governance, lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

CORE is copyrighted to the CORE System Group and the Mental Health Foundation. However, measures can be photocopied freely provided they are not changed in any way, and profit is not made out of any copying. Enquiries about the CORE System should be directed through the CORE System Team, Psychological Therapies Research Centre, 17 Blenheim Terrace, University of Leeds, LEEDS, LS2 9JT, UK. Tel. (+4410) 113 233 1984 Fax. (+4410) 113 233 1956. Alternatively you can email: johnmc@psychology.leeds.ac.uk. Further information can be found on the following website: <http://www.core-systems>

Appendix 2

Text from leaflet for International Students

Welcome to Edinburgh University Student Counselling Service. Coming to study abroad can be a very exciting experience but it can also be more challenging than you expect, whatever age you are. At first there is the excitement of the new place and new people but sometimes, after a while, you can find yourself feeling homesick, anxious and more stressed by day-to-day life than you expect – this is entirely usual. You may not feel that you know the new people in your life well enough to discuss your problems and the family and friends you would normally talk to are far away. This is when you might find it helpful to visit the Student Counselling Service to talk to a counsellor.

In the Student Counselling Service, we provide confidential short term counselling which is available to all matriculated Edinburgh University students. The counsellors are experienced and professionally trained and the service they provide is free of charge.

What is Counselling?

This is when you meet with one of the professionally trained counsellors to talk, confidentially, about your problems. People come to talk about many things, academic pressures, relationship difficulties, feelings of isolation about being in a new country, anxiety, depression, bereavement and many other issues. The counsellor will listen to your problems and sometimes this can help you cope better with some of the issues.

Confidentiality -Code of Practice

Our Service is confidential. Our policy is not to inform anyone that you are using the Service, or to respond to any enquiry about you, without your permission.

What will happen at the initial appointment?

The initial interview is an opportunity for you to talk about what is bothering you so that you and the counsellor can decide whether counselling could be of use to you in dealing with whatever is currently difficult. The counsellor will help to put you at ease and encourage you to talk. You can ask to see a male or female counsellor.

The initial interview usually takes 30 minutes. You will be asked when you are free to come for counselling appointments, if appropriate.

If it is agreed that counselling is appropriate, your name will be placed on our waiting list. We aim to offer you an appointment within two weeks, but you will be told at the initial interview if it will take longer. Any urgency, which suggests that you should be seen sooner, will be discussed during the initial interview.

Workshops

The Student Counselling Service runs a series of half-day workshops throughout the year on Stress and Relaxation, Confidence Building and Procrastination. There is a maximum of 20 places for each workshop.

We hope to run orientation workshops for International Students. Check the website (www.Student-Counselling.ed.ac.uk) for details.