

**AUS** | الجامعة الأميركية في الشارقة  
American University of Sharjah

# University Counseling Services Handbook

# Introduction

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University Counseling Services is integral to the mission of American University of Sharjah (AUS). The center exists to support the university's mission by enhancing and promoting the psychological well-being of all students, faculty, staff and their families.

## ***Mission Statement***

The primary purpose of the American University of Sharjah's University Counseling Services is to provide psychological support to students, faculty, university staff and their families as they pursue their academic and personal goals, and to enhance the quality of each community member's experience at AUS. We aim to support the learning environment of the university by promoting positive mental health for the community through counseling, crisis intervention, consulting, assessments and referrals that are responsive to the individual, cultural and demographic diversity of our community.

## ***Vision Statement***

University Counseling Services aspires to become an exemplary counseling center that enhances the self-understanding and well-being of all members of the AUS community. UCS is dedicated to providing evidence-based best practices in prevention and intervention services and programs in a supportive, safe and welcoming environment for students, faculty, staff and their families. We believe that fostering self-understanding and mental health wellness is at the heart of a vibrant, healthy, creative and engaged campus, and hence consider it a priority to enhance the mental health and the overall well-being of the AUS community. We are committed to the practice of counseling as determined by the ethical codes of the American Psychological Association and the Emirates Psychological Association.

## ***Strategic Goals***

1. To operate as an exemplary university counseling center, taking into account the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) mandate of the center's administrative neutrality and independence.
2. To ensure compliance with International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) standards towards becoming an accredited university counseling center.

## ***Roles and Functions***

The University Counseling Services (UCS) fulfills its mission by providing the following:

- in-house counseling to AUS students, faculty, staff and their families
- an environment of personal safety and respect
- information regarding professional resources to assist community members in making self-referrals
- workshops and promotion of mental health awareness through psycho-educational forums
- collaboration with faculty and staff to promote student well-being through outreach, prevention and educational efforts

## **Provision of Services**

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### ***UCS Accessibility***

Registered students, faculty, staff, and dependent family members of faculty and staff are eligible to use UCS services. Graduating students in active counseling have the option to continue their counseling until deemed appropriate for transfer.

### ***Fees***

The UCS services are free of charge. Clients are responsible for the cost of any external services that may be required in cases of referral by an AUS counselor.

### ***Hours of Operation***

The UCS is open Sundays through Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Flexible hours are available on a case-by-case basis.

The UCS is closed during national/public holidays; however, the UCS is open during fall break, spring break and summer sessions.

For details on emergencies, see the section Crisis Management.

### ***Appointments***

Appointments can be made in person at our center, which is located at the University Health Center, or over the phone or via email ([ucs@aus.edu](mailto:ucs@aus.edu)). Please be aware that the staff of the UCS cannot guarantee the 100 percent privacy of email communications.

***06 515 2677 (for students)***

***06 515 2792 (for students)***

***06 515 2685 (for faculty, staff and families)***

## **At the initial appointment clinical forms will be completed:**

- Clients' rights, consent and practice information form, which discusses your rights to our services and the responsibilities of the counselor.
- Client information form that asks for relevant personal and background information.

## **Cancellations**

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please give a minimum of four hours' notice so that the time can be opened up with sufficient notice to others. Cancellations/no-show appointments will be rescheduled at a mutually convenient time.

## **Walk-ins**

Walk-ins are welcome, however, counselors may or may not be able to see clients depending on their availability and the nature of the visit (i.e., students in crisis). Appointments are recommended to ensure the availability of a counselor.

If you feel you are in crisis, the UCS will make every effort to see you the same day during regular office hours.

## ***Crisis Management***

The UCS facilitates the provision of crisis intervention in emergency situations through collaboration with university departments.

A crisis is defined as when a person:

- has conveyed verbally or behaviorally that he/she is in crisis
- is disoriented and confused or lacks contact with reality
- is in imminent danger of hurting himself/herself or others

In case of an emergency, the appropriate personnel should make an initial evaluation and contact the appropriate emergency services, medical and/or security staff. Once the immediate crisis has been stabilized, should counseling be seen as appropriate to the client's needs, the client should be advised of the services, and should the client wish to avail themselves of the services, an urgent appointment can be provided by the UCS.

UHC Reception: **06 515 2699**

Nurses Station: **06 515 2675**

Medical Emergency: **050 635 7651 / 4911**

To make an appointment for the client please email: **[ucs@aus.edu](mailto:ucs@aus.edu)**

For urgent appointments, please call:

**06 515 2677 (for students)**

**06 515 2792 (for students)**

**06 515 2685 (for faculty, staff & families)**

**In the event that the university is presented with a credible report that a student has threatened or attempted suicide, engaged in efforts to prepare to commit suicide or expressed a preoccupation with suicide, that student will be required to be assessed in person by a qualified medical professional.**

## **UCS Services**

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1. Providing individual and group counseling for personal, developmental and interpersonal issues.
  - Assessment tests and techniques are used as needed to help the community in self-understanding, decision making and determining the most effective intervention strategies within the limits of the available resources.
  - Short- and/or long-term counseling is used to address issues such as: anxiety, depression, relationships, family issues, loss and grief, lifestyle issues, abuse, life decisions, homesickness, college-related transition, and mental health issues that affect academic concerns.
2. Providing crisis intervention, which is carried out either directly or through cooperative arrangements with other resources on campus.
3. Developing and providing preventive programs that would help the community to acquire new knowledge, skills and self-confidence that would help them in their academic, career and interpersonal choices.
4. Providing consultation intervention for individual cases as needed to faculty and other appropriate campus personnel. Specialized referrals may be provided to parents, spouses and other members who might be involved within the community.
5. Clients who require more intensive or specialized services or those with long-term psychiatric conditions will be referred to the appropriate outside mental health providers.

**\* The UCS does not prescribe or monitor psychotropic or any other medications.**

**\* Counseling files are held until graduation and/or termination of service and then destroyed.**

6. Assistance with making a successful transition to the university. This includes:
  - fostering a sense of belonging
  - introducing the academic and personal resources available on campus to support the community
  - giving time and priority to meet students with psychological challenges to provide them with the support needed to adjust and manage their personal goals
  
7. Group work and workshops that can be designed according to any identified need that would benefit the community. Some examples of past and current workshops being offered are:
  - good psychological habits
  - assertiveness skill training
  - stress management and relaxation
  - meditation

## **UCS Assessment and Evaluation**

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Ongoing evaluation and accountability are an integral responsibility of the UCS to monitor and improve the services provided. This process will be carried out through:

- surveys and questionnaires completed by members of the campus community
- evaluation of workshops
- anonymous feedback boxes available for the campus community to provide comments

## **Code of Conduct and Ethics**

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The UCS is a professional center responsible for supporting the well-being of the AUS community.

The center's practice is guided by the American Psychological Association's ethical principles and code of conduct. It creates a framework for ethical and best practice in the delivery of the university counseling services. The code of ethics can be found at <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>.