



RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

Student Counseling Policy

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2023

Policy Number: RUSL/PO/##

Policy for Student Counseling, Policy number RUSL/PO/##

On the recommendation of the Senate, the Council of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, as the governing authority of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka by resolution adopts the following Policy. Policy is cited as Policy No: RUSL/PO/##.

Accepted Date: 01st August 2023

Council Approved Date: 27th Council Meeting held on 31st July 2023

Senate Approved Date: 25th Senate Meeting held on 20th July 2023

Amended Date:

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1. Overview

Universities provide unique learning opportunities for undergraduates through a complex teaching and learning experience. There is a significant difference between teaching and learning experience of G. C. E. Advanced Level studies at schools and undergraduate studies at the university in terms of subject matter, structure of the study programmes, teaching methods adopted, types of assessments and reliance on active and independent learning.

Apart from these, undergraduates are expected to work harmoniously with a diverse group of fellow undergraduates, take individual decisions on academic activities, selecting applicable strategies to deal with both academic and extra-curricular activities and relating to people in various ways. This substantial transition to a new environment leads to a psychological stress among many undergraduates.

If not supported well, most of these undergraduates would perform poorly in academic work and few might drop out. Even some undergraduates may end up with psychological issues such as anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies (Amarasuriya, et al., 2015. Eisenberg, et al., 2007 and Rathnayake and Ekanayaka, 2016). Social and economic conditions of undergraduates could aggravate this situation. Providing proper counselling to students initiating at the right time and continuing as and when necessary could minimize most of the negative impact undergraduates experience at the university environment (Amarasuriya et al., 2015 and Eisenberg, et al., 2007).

Counselling is a sensitive and understanding approach that helps clients (undergraduates) to accept and deal with their problems; communicate their anxieties and fears; derive comfort from a gentle, empathetic, caring person; and increase their ability to care for themselves (Bordin, 1974).

2. Rationale

2.1 A well laid policy emphasizing the roles and responsibilities of student counselors at all levels will establish the system of delivering counselling services to needy undergraduates without a delay.

2.2 Counselling is capable of reducing psychological pressure of undergraduates with problems, helping them to cope with negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, etc., empowering them to face problem situations better and guiding them to find best possible options for the problems they face (Rickinson, 1998).

2.3 Student counselling is capable of supporting undergraduates to overcome emotional issues, recover from psychological impact due to problems they face and develop effectively to achieve better academic outcomes (Rickinson, 1998).

3. Purpose

The purpose of the Policy on Student Counselling is to define the framework and scope of the Chief Student Counselor of the University, Senior Student Counselors of Faculties and Student Counselors that would provide access to independent and confidential counselling for all students of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka whenever they are in need.

4. Policy statement

The policy will ensure undergraduates of RUSL will have access to independent and confidential counselling from dedicated and capable university counsellors in order to achieve their full potential during their university life.

5. Scope

- 5.1 The policy provides the guide and directives to university counselors at all levels to provide confidential counselling to all needy undergraduates irrespective of their gender, race or language thereby encourage the achievement of full potential of all students.
- 5.2 The policy also establishes the pathway of care for undergraduates who seek counselling support from any university counselor.

6. Definitions and keywords

6.1 Counselling

Providing emotional support and basic counselling to the needy undergraduates of the RUSL.

6.2 Counselor

A counsellor actively listens and works with undergraduates to empower them to bring about a change that will help them to success in their personal circumstances and/or their academic studies through a professional relationship.

**The person shall be the Student Counselor, Senior Student Counselor, Career Counselor or the Chief Student Counselor.*

6.3 Relief

A feeling of reassurance and relaxation following release from distress.

6.4 Recovery

A return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength.

6.5 Risk

Circumstances that could potentially be a threat to life, health, well-being and academic performance and success.

6.6 Referral

An act of referring undergraduates for counselling, review, or further action.

7. Procedure

The pathway of care for the help seeking undergraduates is presented in Annex I.

7.1 Capacity building of counselors

All counselors should be capacitated on providing basic emotional support to the needy undergraduates of the university. Services to train university counselors should be sought from the skilled counselors available within and outside the university.

This will be done at least twice a year for all of them. Training shall be organized in liaison with the Staff Development Center.

7.2 Access

Counselling services should be accessible to all students just by contacting the counsellor directly in person, by email or through a phone call.

Details of student counselors, senior student counselors and the chief student counselor should be mentioned in the university/faculty/department websites and student handbooks of the faculties.

All undergraduates should be made aware of the counselling services available, the need to access when necessary and how to access the service.

The counsellor is available during working hours and often available after hours in an emergency. If the Counsellor is not available in an emergency, students shall access them via telephone.

7.3 Conducting session

Sessions can be conducted face to face preferably or by a phone call in an emergency. Face to face sessions are encouraged as it is superior to telephone counselling.

Location must be within the university premises and career counselors can use the Career Guidance Unit of the university to conduct session.

It is the responsibility of an undergraduate to ensure that appointments with the Counsellor do not clash with academic work unless in a genuine emergency. The

frequency and length of a session will depend on the nature and complexity of the issue(s) and/or the point reached within an intervention.

7.4 Consent

At the outset the counselor should get the consent to keep records and share relevant information with academic authorities when the problem is linked with academic issues.

Prior to providing services, the counselors will inform undergraduates about the nature, purpose and potential consequences of the interaction, the limits to confidentiality and right of sharing necessary information with authorities.

7.5 Privacy and Confidentiality

Counselor must ensure confidentiality when collecting, recording, storing, disseminating, and disposing of information at all times. Better to inform all undergraduates about this at the outset.

Undergraduates should be explained on how the counselor prepared to preserve the confidentiality of the information provided and records maintained.

The relationship between the Counsellor and the undergraduate is considered to be fundamental to effective counselling. It is an essential requirement of counselling that the confidential information provided by the student is respected.

Student permission to share information may not be needed in circumstances such as the undergraduate is clearly at risk of attempting suicide, is unable to function, care for his or herself, make his or her own decisions or is deemed to be at risk of harming another person. In that case external assistance may need to be sought by the counselor. This may require limited disclosure of private information.

7.6 Non-discrimination

Undergraduates from all genders and who speak any language should be allowed to access the service without any discrimination.

If the counselor is not speaking the same language as the affected undergraduate, a support from a translator can be sought. In that case translator should be informed prior about the ethical boundaries and consent should be taken from the undergraduate.

When counselling opposite genders, the counselor must adhere to the Policy for Gender Equity and Equality of RUSL.

7.7 Intervention

Counselling intervention of all counselors must be based on the principles of basic counselling. Where necessary and appropriate, the student counselors may discuss the issues with relevant academic staff members, having favour to confidentiality. Active listening and empathy should be maintained throughout the discussion.

In working with an undergraduate the university counsellor's approach will be flexible, using basic counselling principles with the aim of empowering the student to bring about change in self or circumstances and to enhance the personal and/or academic outcomes.

A guide to all counselors shall be given after a training on applying basic counselling principles with university undergraduates.

7.8 Keeping records

In order to comply with counselling standards, records confidential to the counsellor will be maintained according to the format given in Annex II. Notes will be taken of relevant telephone conversations and/or email discussions relating to a student's situation by the Counsellor.

All records should be kept confidential in a locked cupboard. Only the relevant student counselor should have the key.

Where issues are relevant to a student's academic circumstances the Counsellor may discuss the matters with relevant academic staff without breaching the confidentiality. Relevant academic staff may then consult the Counsellor in order to make informed decisions.

7.9 Referral

Some affected undergraduates need further support and other services. Counselor may refer such undergraduates to the counselors in the university/counselling unit or counselors/psychiatrists and other service providers by making an appointment with them or communicating by email or phone.

If there is a life-threatening situation the counselor shall inform the parents to minimize the risk.

7.10 Counselling unit

Establishing a counselling unit at the university level is expected to systematize the counselling service within RUSL.

The unit will consist of the Chief Student Counselor, Career Counselors and available professional counselors in the university. This unit will monitor standards of provision of counselling and maintaining privacy, dignity and confidentiality as a part of safeguarding rights of undergraduates who seek help.

The location of the unit should be accessible to all undergraduates. There should be facilities to conduct sessions with undergraduates confidentially.

8. Responsibilities

Chief Student Counselor of the university, Senior Student Counselors of Faculties and Student Counselors of each Departments are responsible for implementing this policy. Chief Student Counselor should report the progress and other issues with regard to student counselling to the university advisory board.

9. Review

The policy may review in every three years depending on the need.

10. Related documents

This policy is related with the Policy for Gender Equity and Equality and policies of ragging and Students Charter.

11. Abbreviations

RUSL – Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
SGBV – Sexual and Gender based Violence

12. Approval and Amendments

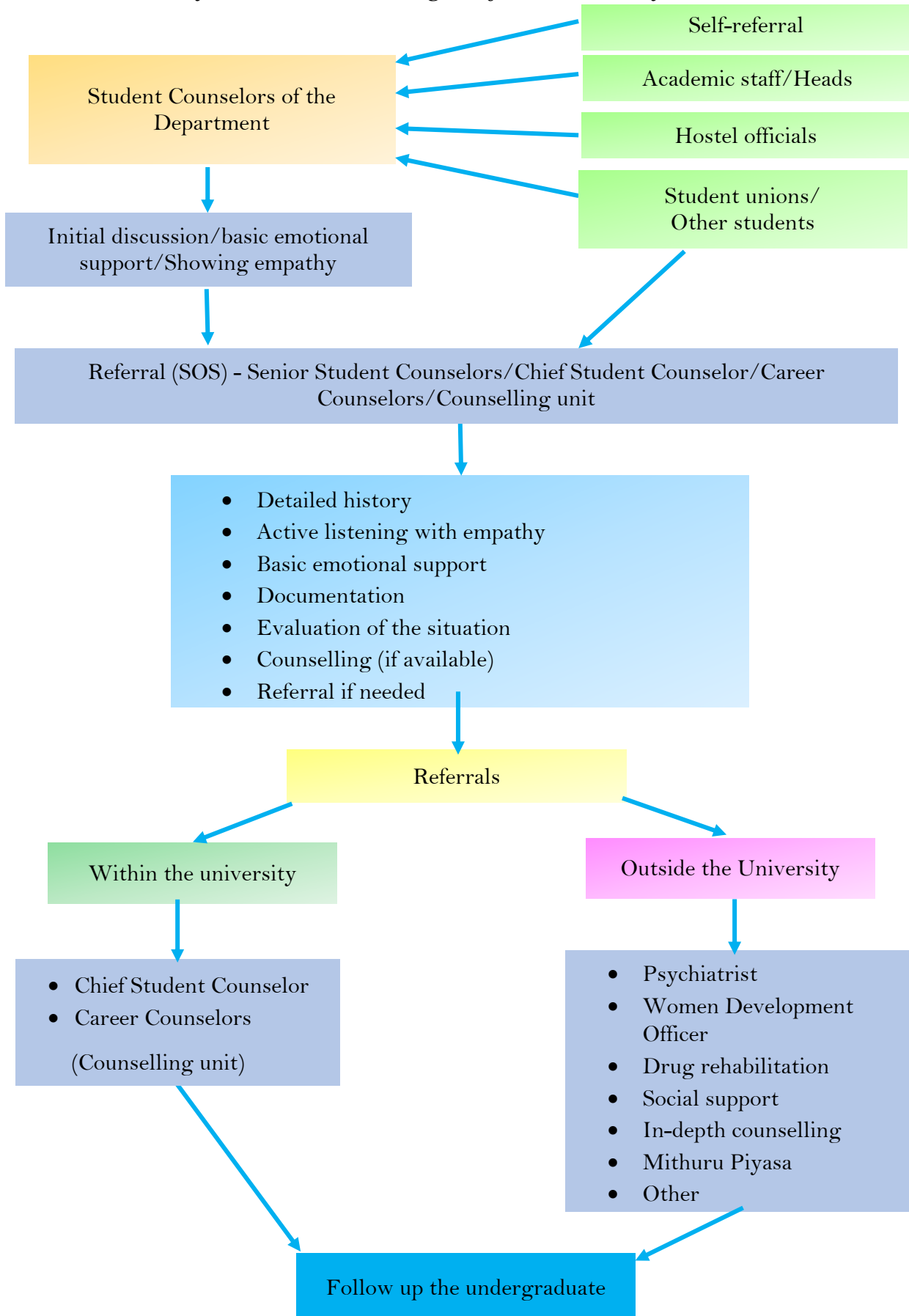
Date adapted	:	
Date commenced	:	
Administrating authority	:	Senate and the Council of RUSL
Date of review	:	
Date rescinded	:	

Related Documents

1. Amarasuriya, S.D., Jorm, A.F. and Reavley, N.J., 2015. Depression literacy of undergraduates in a non-western developing context: the case of Sri Lanka. *BMC research notes*, 8(1), pp.1-14.
2. Bordin, E.S., 1974. *Research strategies in psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons.
3. Eisenberg, D., Gollust, S.E., Golberstein, E. and Hefner, J.L., 2007. Prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and suicidality among university students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(4), pp.534-542.
4. Rathnayake, S. and Ekanayaka, J., 2016. Depression, anxiety, and stress among undergraduate nursing students in a public university in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Caring Sciences*, 9(3), pp.1020-1032.
5. Rickinson, B., 1998. The relationship between undergraduate student counselling and successful degree completion. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(1), pp.95-102.

Annex I

Pathway of student counselling - Rajarata University of Sri Lanka



Annex II

(Serial Number)

CONFIDENTIAL

Date	
Location of the consultation	
Name of the person (If consented)	
Student Registration number (If consented)	
Name of the counselor	
A summary of the presenting problem	
Main issues identified	
Intervention summary	
Details of referral (If done)	