

Bristol SU

Academic Advice

Service Policies

Confidentiality policy

We want all students who use our services to feel comfortable talking to us. To achieve this, all aspects of our service (including the fact that a student has come to us for advice or support) should remain confidential. However, in certain circumstances we may be unable to treat a case confidentially.

This policy sets out what we mean by “confidentiality” and the circumstances in which we may disclose information.

The general rule...

When we refer to information being treated “confidentially”, we mean that we will not disclose personal information, or information which is given to us, to any third party without explicit written or verbal consent.

Who is a “third party”?

In the context of advice, a “third party” means any person or organisation outside the Bristol SU Advice Services and its managers.

In the context of student-led support groups, a “third party”, is anyone outside of the group leaders and the Bristol SU Advice Services and its managers.

If it is appropriate, and written consent is given to do so, we can liaise with family, friends and partners about individual cases.

When we will disclose information about a student

We will only disclose information to a third party in three specific circumstances:

1. If a student asks us to. We will require signed consent to do so.
2. When we are required to do so by law.
3. When we feel that an individual may be at risk to themselves or another person.

Student Information

We use information such as course, faculty and fee status to enable us to provide accurate and appropriate advice. All personal and case information is stored in a secure case management system which is only accessible by the Academic Advice Advisers and the service managers.

The data is kept for 6 years, in line with Advice UK standards, and then deleted. If you would like your details to be deleted, you can request this at any time.

We also use anonymised data about students and their cases for reporting purposes, for example, our annual report. Further details about the information we hold and how it is used are set out in the [Bristol SU Privacy Policy](#).

Review date: August 2025

Conflict of interest Policy

The Academic Advice service aims to support (and be seen to support) all students on an equal and impartial basis. We hope that every student who wishes to use our service will be able to do so. However, where a conflict of interest is identified we may be unable to assist (or continue to assist).

This policy sets out what we mean by a “conflict of interest” and what we will do when a conflict of interest, or potential conflict, is identified.

What is a “conflict of interest”?

A conflict of interest occurs where we are unable to assist a student in an impartial way. A conflict of interest will also arise if we consider that, by assisting, we would be perceived as failing to act impartially.

Examples of potential conflicts of interest include:

- two students approaching the service for help with the same problem;
- a student making a complaint about a member of staff who works closely with the Academic Advice Team;
- a student wishing to take a course of action which could be damaging to the services we provide;
- a student asking for advice about a service which Bristol SU provides as part of its services; or
- a student presenting information to us that we know to be false.

How are conflicts of interest identified?

The Academic Advice team are aware of situations and circumstances which have the potential for conflicts of interest. We record any enquiries which could lead to a potential conflict of interest on our confidential case recording system, and we check against this before accepting a student’s case. We may also identify conflicts of interest in our team meetings or formal case reviews. Where necessary, we will share information within our team to identify any potential conflicts at an early stage.

If we identify a potential conflict of interest, we may be able to prevent this from becoming an actual conflict of interest. We may do this by:

- asking for consent to allow us to advise more than one student on the same issue (if appropriate)
- establishing special working procedures for a particular case, such as requiring a particular adviser to support a particular student.

What happens if a conflict of interest is identified?

We will always offer students alternative and appropriate support. This could include:

- providing details of other services.
- referring students to an Elected Officer.
- referring students to The Students’ Union at UWE’s advice centre as part of our reciprocal agreement with them to provide an independent source of advice; or to an

alternative source of mediation; or to alternative sources of support.

Review date August 2026

Restriction & Withdrawal of Service Policy

Our aim is to advise and support our students as much as possible. However, there may be occasions where we feel it is necessary to restrict or withdraw a student's access to the service. Reasons for this can include:

- Where a student has refused to fill in our enquiry form.
- Where there is a conflict of interest for an advisor, we can refer to UWE.
- Where a student exhibits threatening, violent or abusive behaviour to an advisor, or any member of Bristol SU staff.
- Where a student deliberately withholds information that is key to their case.
- Where a student repeatedly misses appointments, without giving sufficient reason or notice.
- Where a student desires a disproportionate amount of time and/or attention from the Academic Advice Service e.g. multiple, daily emails and phone calls.
- If the student has made a complaint about the Academic Advice Service which is currently under investigation.
- If a student does not act upon the advice given and submits into a University process in a manner that could damage the reputation of Academic Advice.
- If the level or type of service required is beyond the scope of Academic Advice. In cases such as this, we will often refer the student to an alternative and appropriate service.
- If a student attempts to involve an advisor in illegal or immoral activity.

Where an advisor feels that a restriction or withdrawal is appropriate, it will be discussed with the Advice Service Manager and Head of Service.

Academic Advice may decide to limit the student's access to the service e.g. if a student has repeatedly missed appointments, we may decide to correspond via email only. Or, if appropriate, to withdraw the service altogether. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.