



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

University
Counselling
Service.

Request for a Letter from UCS

University Counselling Service policy on providing evidence for a 'Special Circumstances' application: Guidance to students¹

The Service can provide supporting evidence for a 'special circumstances' application if you have been in counselling and your counsellor feels able to confirm that your particular personal issues or difficulties have *significantly* affected your academic functioning. This can only be with your direct consent.

Students can request a counselling appointment at any time and self-referral is the most common method. The fact that a student has seen a counsellor does not necessarily mean his or her circumstances are unusually distressing or extreme. Even if you have used the Service over a sustained period, we still may not feel able to provide evidence for a special circumstances application. In these cases we can provide brief confirmation of the dates of your attendance.

In order to provide supporting evidence for special circumstances, a counsellor needs to know you well enough to form a professional opinion. Meeting you only once, or briefly some time ago, usually does not constitute sufficient contact.

However, occasionally there may be exceptions to the general principle above. For example, if your personal circumstances were so extreme or traumatic or the content so sensitive that it would be unreasonable to expect you to discuss it with a member of staff in your School.

You should be advised that applications for special circumstances should normally be made in advance of assessments being submitted (for extension of deadlines) or the meetings of Boards of Examiners (regarding exam performance). See the University's guidelines on special circumstances applications at www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/forms/absence.html

We hope this clarifies the terms under which we will consider providing evidence to support special circumstances applications. The Service aims to provide this evidence only when it is meaningful, and only when a counsellor has sufficient understanding and awareness of your personal circumstances.

If, having read the above, you think that you would like a letter from the Counselling Service, please complete a Client Letter Request Form and return it to the Counselling Service Reception. Completion of this form is regarded as consent to release information to the person(s)/department as indicated on the form. You might be asked to discuss your request with your counsellor or the duty counsellor. In considering your

¹ Our thanks to the University of Exeter Counselling Service for kindly allowing us to adapt their documents 'Counselling Service policy on providing mitigating evidence' for our Service



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request, the Service and your counsellor endeavour to act in your best interest using their professional judgement.

If you are currently in counselling, you should submit the completed form to your counsellor for consideration.

If you had seen a counsellor, but is not currently in counselling, your request will go to the counsellor you saw last.

In the absence of your counsellor, such as due to annual leave, you will be told when your counsellor is likely to return. If you do not want to wait for your counsellor's return, the Service can only confirm your attendance at the Service.

If your counsellor has left the Counselling Service, we would usually only provide confirmation of your attendance at the Service.

We strongly recommend that you collect the letter in person. Please provide us with your current contact details so that we could let you know when the letter is ready for you.

Revised August 2009



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Confidential

For official use
Client ID:

Client Letter Request Form (Student)

Full Name

Registration no. Course

Year of Study Date of Birth

Addressee (who the letter is to go to)

Position (i.e. Personal Tutor, Exam Secretary etc.)

Address

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..... Postcode

Letter content required

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I authorise the Counselling Service to disclose my attendance at the Counselling Service and information to the person(s) as indicated above.

Signature Date