**Union Support Service Confidentiality Statement**

This policy is to be read in line with the Constitution of the Union Support Service (“USS”) and its other appendices, and the overarching Constitution of City Students’ Union and any policies thereunder.

**Policy Statement**

The USS recognises that confidentiality is essential in any situation where personal information and problems are being shared; without this, individuals will not feel safe to talk or share their problems and experiences with the Adviser.

Confidentiality is understood to mean that no information regarding a student or staff member shall be given directly or indirectly to any third party external to the USS without the express permission of the student concerned; nor shall any internal matters be discussed with external parties. Students shall be given the opportunity to discuss their issues in a confidential interview space and have their information stored in a secure location.

The USS is committed to providing a confidential service to all its service users. These principles of confidentiality are integrated across all aspects of the USS. All our staff and users have the right to have their interests protected and services safeguarded through a confidential service.

**The USS will:**

* Ensure nothing said to an Adviser is shared with any other organisation or an individual either internal or external to the University without the student’s express permission.
* Challenge any information not treated as confidential in its own Policy and practice and will encourage all connected institutions and individuals to do the same.
* Ensure all employees, volunteers and students are aware of this Policy and are encouraged to support its objectives.
* The work of the USS is also governed by the City, University of London policies on Data Protection, Information Security and Records Management.

**Operations**

* Case Records – The USS keeps case records on all students using the service, this is to ensure the case is monitored throughout, the Adviser is aware of the history of the case, and the student can be provided with the correct advice and support. Records of appointments with students and case notes will be kept in a secure drive on the computers in the USS offices, and access to this drive is granted to the Student Advocacy and Policy Coordinator and the Advisers only, and furthermore is password protected. Any information kept in hard copy will either be scanned in to the secure drive and disposed of as confidential waste, or will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the USS office. Records are kept for a maximum of five years and are either deleted from the secure drive in the case of soft copies or are disposed of as confidential waste if kept as hard copies. Under the Data Protection Act 1998, students have the right of access to notes held on their file containing personal data. Any applications for file access should be made in writing to the Student Advocacy and Policy Coordinator.
* Consent – Prior to any action being taken by an Adviser on behalf of a student (either internally or externally), the USS will always ensure that consent has been given. This permission can be given in an email or on the information sheet that the student completes prior to their appointment, and will be kept in the case record of the student. If the consent is given verbally, the Adviser will write down in the case records the nature of the permission given.
* Statistical Recording – The USS is committed to accurate and appropriate statistical recording to monitor the usage of the service and to identify and recurring issues which may need specific attention. All statistical records are kept in an anonymous format to prevent the identification of individuals. Any information provided to the University or external agencies in this regard will be anonymised; under no circumstances will any details be given which could enable a student to be identified.

**Expectations**

We expect both our staff and our service users to adhere to this Policy at all times, whether during an appointment (either in person or over the telephone), via email, in a meeting, in a hearing or whilst acting in a capacity connected to the USS.

**Exceptions**

An Adviser can only talk to individuals outside of the USS about a case or a student with the express permission of the student concerned.

Exceptions to this are:

* In the case of students who have been removed from their course the USS has an obligation to let University Security know that the student in question has an appointment with the USS and so will be on campus at those pre-arranged times. The USS will not breach confidentiality by telling Security any more about the appointment than the times. The USS accepts no responsibility for anything that happens on campus outside of the student’s designated appointment slot or during the slot if the student has left the USS.
* When the Adviser has concerns about the student’s health or wellbeing and contacts the Student Health Centre or any branch of the Learning Success Department. If any such conversation does take place this will be confidential and only known by the Adviser and the Departmental individual contacted.
* Where the USS is bound by law to disclose information, such us the obligations imposed by (but not limited to) the Children’s Act or the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

**Training, Development and Supervision**

All involved with the USS and acting on behalf of it should abide by this Policy. The Manager of the USS (at all times the Student Advocacy and Policy Coordinator) has a duty to ensure all staff (whether paid or volunteers) are made aware of the Policy and adhere to it.

All staff will receive training to ensure they are aware of their rights and responsibilities under this Policy and support to help them understand and implement it. A copy of the Policy will be provided to all staff for them to sign and agree to its adherence; copies of these will be kept in the City Students’ Union office.

**Implementing and Following the Policy**

Anyone acting on behalf of the USS will endeavour to become an example of confidentiality by adhering to all responsibilities as outlined in this Policy.

The implementation and effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

**Unacceptable Behaviour**

Any breaches of confidentiality (other than those provided in the exceptions listed above) will constitute unacceptable behaviour and accordingly will not be tolerated.

Anyone aware of an incident of unacceptable behaviour has a duty to report it to the Students’ Union. Any such incidents will be treated seriously and dealt with fairly.

Any person in breach of this Policy will be dealt with through the under the City, University of London Disciplinary Regulations.

The USS will treat seriously all complaints of unacceptable behaviour made by anyone acting on behalf of the USS and will take action where appropriate. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the USS Complaints Procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

**Changes to the Policy**

Any changes to this policy may be made by the Student Advocacy and Policy Coordinator, the City Students’ Union Chief Executive Officer or the Board of Trustees, and must be approved by the latter group.