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Document Number	044	Document Revision	D	Date Issued
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DOCUMENT FRONT SHEET				
1	Document category	Guidelines		
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3	Minimum list of document users to be notified upon release of document update	All Staff and all Students		
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These guidelines are intended for the use of students and staff in order for them to be familiar with the services offered by the Counselling Unit and how to access them.

1. Scope of counselling

The aim of counselling is to offer a safe and confidential space which helps individuals recognise unhealthy patterns, explore new ways of being, change dysfunctional ways of relating, and affirm aspects of themselves which they undervalue. This process encourages personal growth leading to a more productive, self-enhancing, and fulfilling life. All this is done in an environment that respects the diversity of those using the service.

2. Practical information on the service

- a) Counselling sessions are free of charge for both students and staff.
- b) Sessions last 50 minutes.
- c) Attendance is usually on a weekly or fortnightly basis, depending on clients' needs.
- d) Appointments by staff and students should preferably be made during their free time.
- e) Clients need to contact their counsellor as soon as possible if they need to cancel or postpone a session. If a person misses two sessions in a row without any reason, counselling is automatically concluded.
- f) Clients will be invited to complete a 'Counselling Feedback Sheet' at the end of their counselling or at the end of each academic year in order to help the Unit evaluate and improve its service.
- g) Clients who have graduated or resigned from the College may continue to avail of the services of the Counselling Unit for two concluding sessions.
- h) Counsellors are available every day of the academic year, Monday to Friday from 08:00 until 16:30.
- i) While the Counselling Unit continues to operate during the summer recess, the service provided at that time will be on a limited basis.

3. Confidentiality

- a) The highest level of confidentiality is maintained by the practitioners of the Unit. Unless clients give their consent, no information regarding the clients will be passed on to a third party.
- b) However, the counsellors may decide to break confidentiality if in their professional judgement:
 - there is a risk of the client seriously harming themselves or being harmed;
 - there is a risk of another person being seriously harmed; or
 - there is a risk of a serious crime being committed.
- c) In these cases, the counsellor will first seek to obtain the client's consent, unless the law specifies otherwise. If the client disagrees with the disclosure but the counsellor still believes that it is necessary, the counsellor will inform the client that the disclosure will occur and with whom.
- d) The Unit keeps different kinds of records to support practitioners in their activity. All these documents are property of the Unit and are kept in a safe and secure location. For more information, kindly refer to the Counsellor Unit policy.

4. The Counselling Unit

4.1 Location

- a) The Counselling Unit is part of the Student Support Services and is located in the Student House, Main Campus, Paola.
- b) Practitioners can also meet clients at the Satellite Institutes.
- c) It is the choice of the client whether to meet at Main Campus or any one of the Satellite Institutes.
- d)

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4.2 Practitioners

- a) Unless a particular person from the Unit is required, contact needs to be made through counsellors@mcast.edu.mt.
- b) The Counselling Unit is made up of the following practitioners:
 - **Student adviser:** Jacqueline Micallef – Jacqueline.M.Micallef@mcast.edu.mt, tel: 23987136
 - **Senior Counsellor:** Marthese Vassallo – marthese.vassallo@mcast.edu.mt, tel: 23987133
 - **Counsellor:** Isabel Camilleri – isabel.camilleri@mcast.edu.mt, tel: 23987115
 - **Counsellor:** Michael Conti – michael.conti@mcast.edu.mt, tel: 23987129
 - **Counsellor (Gozo):** Anne Marie Aquilina: Anne.Marie.Aquilina@mcast.edu.mt

4.3 Choosing a counsellor

- a) A client can choose the counsellor of their liking. If the chosen counsellor is unavailable, the client can either wait until the counsellor can see them, or be assigned to another counsellor.
- b) If staff members need to consult counsellors regarding their concern over a student, the member of staff can opt to discuss this with a counsellor of their choice. However, if the student agrees on a referral, they have the option to start counselling with a counsellor of their choice.

4.4 Changing counsellors

- a) In case a client wishes to change counsellor, the client is strongly encouraged to return to the initial counsellor to discuss such a change. If they still wish to change, the procedure will be explained by the counsellors involved.

5. How to contact the Unit

- a) Individuals can contact the Unit directly, or they can be referred by staff, parents, other students, external agencies, or other professionals.
- b) Contact needs to be made with the student adviser by phone or email, in order to setup an initial, brief appointment where a registration form is filled and a counselling agreement is explained.
- c) If a client requires a particular counsellor, the initial contact can be made directly with the counsellor.
- d) Individuals will be contacted within one or two days of their referral to the Unit.
- e) In case of emergencies, individuals can contact one of the counsellors directly. Every reasonable effort will be made to contact the person on the same working day.

6. Referring students to the Unit

- a) For some students, being at College can prove to be a very challenging and stressful experience. The range of supportive services provided throughout the College are significant in assisting students to cope effectively and successfully in achieving academic success and maintaining personal well being. However, there are times when more specialist intervention is required in order to address specific issues that may arise. It is at these times that a referral to the Counselling Unit may be appropriate.
- b) Staff, parents, other students, external agencies, or other professionals can all refer a student to the Counselling Service or seek consultation with one of the counsellors.
- c) In case a member of staff or student or their close relatives experience a tragic accident or death, MCAST administration or the administration of the relative Institute needs to notify the Counselling Unit through a referral form.

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6.1 What to do when students disclose with a member of staff

Student self-referral	Referring to counselling services	Referring to Institute Administrator or to Institute Student Support Service Coordinators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stay calm. 2. Listen to the student. 3. Adopt a non-judgemental attitude. 4. Reassure the student that self-referral to the Counselling Unit is welcomed and encouraged. 5. Provide student with contact details of the Counselling Unit. 6. Follow-up with student to show concern and ask them whether they have contacted the Unit. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stay calm. 2. Listen to the student. 3. Adopt a non-judgemental attitude. 4. Discuss confidentiality and its limitations with the student. 5. Discuss direct referral to the counsellors with the student if the student prefers that you make initial contact with a counsellor on their behalf. 6. Fill in the Referral Form, not necessarily in the student's presence. 7. Support student during referral time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stay calm. 2. Listen to the student. 3. Adopt a non-judgemental attitude. 4. Discuss confidentiality and its limitations with the student. 5. Discuss referral to Institute Administration (Director or Deputy Director) or to Institute Student Support Services Coordinator with the student. 7. Choose whether or not to fill in the Referral Form together with Line Manager or the Institute Student Support Coordinator. 8. Support student during referral time

6.2 What to do regarding concerns over a student

- a) Concerns can be shared in confidentiality with one of the counsellors at the Unit. Otherwise, members of staff can share their concerns in confidentiality with the Institute Director or Deputy Director.
- b) Unless the case demands that confidentiality is broken (as indicated in section 2, above), it is up to the member of staff concerned to decide whether or not to disclose the student's name with the counsellor. If the member of staff prefers not to disclose the student's name, they are taking full responsibility for their concern over the student.

7. Referring members of staff to the Unit

- a) Staff members too can be passing through a difficult moment. Like in the case of students, a referral to the Counselling Unit may be appropriate in certain situations. This can be done by other members of staff who can also consult with one of the counsellors.

8. Complaints about the functioning of the Unit

- a) If there are concerns regarding the conduct of a practitioner within the Unit, clients are encouraged to initially address this with the practitioner concerned.
- b) If this route is not satisfactory, then individuals need to contact the Director of Information and Student Support Services, or the Deputy Principal of Academic Operations and Student Services, or the College Principal.
- c) MCAST authorities will investigate and process the matter according to MCAST protocol.