

STUDENT ADVICE

Confidentiality Policy, Record Keeping and Data Protection

All students who wish to receive advice from Student Advice must accept and consent to the terms and conditions set out below. If you do not accept these terms, we are unable to provide you with advice.

Confidentiality Statement

We are committed to providing a confidential service to our users which:

- Meets statutory and legal requirements.
- Respects users' rights and interests.
- Acts as a safeguard for the service provided by the adviser.

We will not release the information you disclose to us to anyone else without your permission, except in the circumstances noted in 2 below.

1. Definition of Confidentiality

We define confidentiality as a 'circle of confidentiality' within which Student Advice staff members may discuss information with each other. We will hold any such discussions in an appropriate environment to ensure that confidentiality is respected.

There are some circumstances where we may need to obtain information from another department in the University e.g., the Finance Office, Credit Controllers, Registry Offices, Admissions or Visa Compliance. We may need to do this in order to obtain relevant information which may help to resolve your case e.g., your student record, fee payment details, Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)

We will not disclose your personal circumstances or the specifics of your case without your consent.

If we need to discuss your case with external agencies we will set up 'consent to share', this will require you either contact the external agency to give consent or complete a consent form or send a consent email.

2. Disclosure

There are occasions when we need to disclose information without first obtaining your consent, for example:

- Meeting compliance obligations for immigration authorities (including the Home Office) or the police in order to comply with the University of Westminster's UKVI reporting obligations. The University's Student Visa Sponsor duties can be read here. Please note that visa refusals and studying on an expired visa will need to be reported to the University's Visa Compliance team.
- Where we consider there to be a risk to you or to the wider community and/or
- Where otherwise required by law
- Where a student's welfare or vulnerability is causing concern, their needs may be discussed with managers. This is to ensure that students are being supported in an integrated way, information shared are limited and with the Students' welfare in mind.



3. Record keeping

We need to keep a written record of the advice we give you and the action we or you have agreed to take. We may also need to keep copies of relevant documents and correspondence. All records are kept locked within the service. Paper files are kept in locked cabinets, electronic files are kept on our secure case recording system or on approved University email systems and approved drives. We also keep some of the files in secure off site archive storage. Advice case records are kept for 6 years after you have left the University. After this time paper records are destroyed by shredding and electronic records are permanently deleted.

4. Access to records

Under the General Data Protection Regulations, you have a right to access your record. If you require a full copy of your case record you will need to give notice of your request. For full details of the University of Westminster Data Protection Policy, please click [here](#).

If you require copies of documents from your case record, we can normally give you these on request. If your case record has been archived off site, it will take up to seven working days to retrieve it.

5. Code of Ethics

The Student Advisers adhere to the UKCISA/AISA Code of Ethics. Copies are available on request.

6. Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Procedure

We are always looking for ways to improve our service. If you have any suggestion or comment, good or bad, we would like to hear about it. Please email us at studentadvice@westminster.ac.uk

If you have a complaint, please tell us. In the first instance the Student Advice and Funding Manager will hear any complaint. We hope that this way it can be resolved quickly, informally and to your satisfaction. If you are not happy with the way your complaint is dealt with by the Student Advice and Funding Manager, you can use the University's formal complaints procedure. Details are available [here](#).

Immigration advice is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). If your complaint relates to immigration advice and cannot be resolved by using the University complaints procedure, you can make a complaint to the OISC. Full details of the procedure are [here](#).

Debt advice is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. If your complaint relates to debt advice and cannot be resolved using the University complaints procedure, you can make a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service [here](#).

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