

BOLGATANGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY



Guidance and Counselling Policy

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Guidance and Counselling is a support service aimed at helping individuals discover and develop their educational, vocational and psychological potentials to achieve an optimal level of personal happiness and social usefulness. Guidance and counselling is, therefore, fundamental to all spheres of life and central to the professional and academic progress and development of students and staff.

Bolgatanga Technical University (BTU) recognizes this fundamental need and puts together this policy as a guide to coordinate and structure the University's efforts in providing high-quality services that support students and staff's personal-social, developmental, and academic needs.

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

In line with the vision and mission of Bolgatanga Technical University (BTU), this policy provides guidelines for guidance and counselling practices and procedures in the University to ensure consistency and to respond to the diverse needs of the University community.

1.2 Scope of the Policy

The Policy focuses on students, staff and other relevant stakeholders of Bolgatanga Technical University (BTU). It deals with individual and group counselling, academic counselling, career counselling, crisis intervention/emergency services, outreach programs, psychological assessment and consultation.

1.3 Goals of the Policy

The mandate of BTU is to provide quality education and innovation which are essential to the sustainable development of individuals and society. The provision of quality education is in line with SDG goal 4 which aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- i. deliver high-quality guidance and counselling services to the University community.
- ii. provide career services to students and staff.
- iii. contribute to a safe and healthy environment for students and staff.
- iv. support the healthy growth and development of students and staff through consultation and outreach services.
- v. increase partnership and collaboration with other specialized guidance and counselling outfits for resource mobilization and sharing.

SECTION TWO:

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROCEDURE

The provision of guidance and counselling and related services should follow the following procedures:

- i. Any student or staff seeking counselling services, shall first complete a Counselling Request Form at the Department level or at the G & C Unit.
- ii. After filling the form, the student's or staff's needs will be evaluated by a counsellor, a therapist or referred out. Referrals shall be based on services required by the client, practice limits and available resources.
- iii. The guidance needs of students and staff will be assessed on quarterly basis and relevant programs organized to address them.

2.1 Counselling Services

Service	Target Persons	Provider	Duration
Individual Counselling	Students and staff	University Counsellor	6-8 sessions (each session is approx. 45 min)
Group Counselling	University Community	University Counsellor	4-6 sessions (each session is approx. 45 min)
Consultation	University Community	University Counsellor	As needed
Psychological Assessment	University Community	Clinical psychologist Psychologist	Intake session (Depends on the assessment)
Psychiatric Services	University Community	Psychiatrist	Intake session (maximum 50 min).

2.2 Definition of Services

Individual Counselling

- i. Personal Counselling includes but not limited to: anxiety, depression, stress, relationship conflicts, loss and grief, sexuality, marital problems, drug and alcohol, smoking, and life decisions.
- ii. Academic Counselling includes but not limited to: test anxiety, academic stress, learning difficulties, learning strategies, developing study skills, time management, and teamwork skills.
- iii. Career/Vocational Counselling refers to psychological examination and testing. This could be done through tools such as the Holland Career Inventory to help students determine their career tendencies.

2.2.1 Group Counselling

Group counselling services will be provided to a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of eight (8) individuals where such individuals share similar needs to promote emotional, behavioral, psychological and social development. The service may be in the form of psycho-educational groups, structured groups and focus groups. Group counselling may last for 4-6 weeks.

2.2.2 Sanctioned Counselling

Students and staff may be referred or mandated to receive counselling services. These include but are not limited to low academic performance (as measured by GPA) and anti-social behavioral issues including: smoking, sexual misconduct, drunkenness, fighting and bullying. In these instances, confidentiality may be limited as a result of communication, referral sources, attendance and participation, treatment plan and progress reports. Clients shall be informed regarding the limits of confidentiality in such cases.

2.2.3 Crisis Intervention

Crisis intervention is a service provided to clients in an acute emotional-distressed situation including: suicide attempts, suicide threats, physical assault, violence and disasters.

2.2.4 Referrals

This involves sending clients (staff and/or students) to other counselling centres to seek additional or specialized service.

2.2.5 Outreach Services

Outreach services in the form of preventive and reactive programs will be organized within and beyond the University community. These programs will be in the form of seminars, workshops, fora, and community engagement to address pertinent developmental, academic, social and career-related issues.

SECTION THREE: CONFIDENTIALITY, RECORD MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ADMINISTRATION

- i. Client-related information shall be kept confidential by the Guidance and Counselling Unit (G & C).
- ii. Staff of the G & C Unit shall be bounded by the ethical codes to keep client-related information confidential.
- iii. Clients shall be informed regarding the policies on confidentiality, exceptions to confidentiality and the release of information during the sessions.
- iv. Hard copies of confidential information shall be kept in a locked cabinet that could be accessed only by Staff of the Unit in consultation with the Head of the G & C Unit.
- v. The G & C Unit shall bring closure to folders of cases that are deemed completed.
- vi. Electronic confidential information shall be stored in a computer at the G & C Unit with a password.
- vii. The Head of G & C shall have access to files of clients unless otherwise authorized.
- viii. Hard and soft copies of relevant records shall be kept for five (5) years following case closure.
- ix. The documented cases may be discarded after five (5) years.
- x. Upon appointment, staff of the G & C shall sign a Confidentiality Agreement Form.

3.1 Release of Information

- i. The release of information may be done after obtaining a client's consent.
- ii. Information may be released when requested by a client or when the client is referred to another professional caregiver or as required by law.
- iii. When the information to be released is mandated by law, the G & C Unit shall release the information based on its relevance and the need of the requested information.

3.2 Counselling Code of Ethics

Staff of the G & C Unit shall provide services guided by the following ethical principles:

- i. Nonmaleficence or avoiding actions that cause harm;
- ii. Beneficence or working for the good of the individual and society by promoting mental health and well-being;
- iii. Justice or treating individuals equitably and fostering fairness and equality;
- iv. Fidelity or honoring commitments and keeping promises, including fulfilling one's responsibilities of trust in professional relationships;
- v. Veracity or dealing truthfully with students, staff and relevant stakeholders.

3.3 Policy Administration

The Head of the G & C Unit working under the Registrar shall:

- i. Be the custodian of this policy.
- ii. Administer, maintain and document programmes that support students' and staff's personal-social, developmental and academic needs.
- iii. Oversee the dissemination of relevant information to the University community.
- iv. Lead the review of this policy by proposing to the Academic Board through Management every five (5) years where necessary.
- v. The University shall publicize the Guidance and Counselling Policy on the University's website.

SECTION FOUR: MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

4.1 Research

The G & C Unit will rely on up-to-date research to inform its services. The Unit may encourage or support staff and students to conduct research related to guidance and counselling. Individuals conducting research would be advised to familiarize themselves with BTU Code of Ethics on Research.

4.2 Participation in Research

- i. Researchers who involve students and staff in research should ensure that their participation will not affect their academic work.
- ii. Clients who choose not to participate in non-academic research shall not be compelled to do so.
- iii. Counsellors and other staff conducting research involving clients shall take necessary precautions to protect them from any adverse consequences.
- iv. Clients are at liberty to decline or withdraw from the research.

4.3 Termination of Services

Counselling services are voluntary (except otherwise sanctioned by the University) and clients can withdraw from the services at any time.

Services may be terminated when:

- i. The client has achieved the therapeutic goals,
- ii. Counsellors assess that the therapy is not beneficial to the client,
- iii. The client is unable to meet four (4) appointments or make several cancelations,
- iv. A referral is made to another provider,
- v. The client has left/completed Bolgatanga Technical University.

The termination of counselling service must be a joint decision of the client and counsellor with respect to the client's autonomy. This is done

in time to prepare the client transition out of therapy.

4.4 Guidance & Counselling Annual Report

The Head of the G & C Unit shall compile an Annual Report and submit same to the Registrar. The purpose of the annual report is to inform the quality and effectiveness of services rendered by the Unit. The Annual report shall include the following information:

- *Demographic Statistics:* Information on the gender, department, age, and referral source of the clients.
- *Counselling Services Statistics:* Total number of services provided by the G & C Unit as well as the total number of the beneficiaries. The services are individual counselling, group counseling, workshops, consultation, psychological assessment and campus-wide events.
- *Counsellor Evaluation and Supervision Reports:* Information on Counsellor Evaluation Reports which indicates performance evaluation as well as supervision related data (e.g. supervisory visits).
- *Needs Assessment:* Results from the needs assessment survey conducted with clients, which inform the plan of the BTU G & C Unit for the upcoming academic year.
- *Results Summary:* A summary of the results in a narrative format for ease of communication; including areas for development to guide planning for the next academic year.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American Counselling Association (ACA), (2014). ACA Code of Ethics. American Counselling Association.

Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2004). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision*. Needham

Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Confidentiality Statement

Client information (e.g. personal, family, treatment plan, and session schedule) and any other information of a private or sensitive nature are considered confidential. Confidential information shall not be read or discussed by any employee unless pertaining to his or her specific job requirements. Examples of inappropriate disclosures include:

- Employees discussing or revealing any confidential information to friends or family members.
- Employees discussing or revealing any confidential information to other employees without a legitimate need to know.
- Employees discussing the cases in places where others can hear.

The unauthorized disclosure of confidential information or unauthorized access, misuse, theft, destruction, alteration, or sabotage of such information by employees can subject each individual employee to civil and criminal liability.

Appendix B: Employee Confidentiality Agreement Form

I hereby acknowledge, by my signature below, that I understand that confidential records of clients and data to which I have knowledge and access in the course of my employment with Bolgatanga Technical University Guidance & Counselling Unit shall be kept confidential, and this confidentiality is a condition of my employment. This information shall not be disclosed to anyone under any circumstances, except to the extent necessary to fulfill my job requirements. I understand that my duty to maintain confidentiality continues even after I am no longer an employee of the University.

I am familiar with the guidelines in place at Bolgatanga Technical University Guidance & Counseling Unit pertaining to the use and disclosure of clients' confidential information. Approval should first be obtained before any disclosure of any confidential information not addressed in the guidelines and policies and procedures of the university. I also understand that the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information pertaining guiding and counselling clients of the university is grounds for disciplinary action in accordance with the university rules and regulations including other appropriate Laws.

Date:

Name of Employee:.....Signature:.....

Name of Supervisor:.....Signature.....Date:.....

Appendix C: Authorization to Release Confidential Information

I _____ authorize the University
Guidance & Counseling Unit

(Name of the Student)

to release to the person/organization stated below:

The following information pertaining to myself:

Treatment history/intake diagnosis

Psychological test results

Psychiatric evaluation/medication history

Dates of attendance

Others (must specify)

This consent will automatically expire one (1) year after the date of my signature as it appears below.

I understand I have the right to refuse to sign this form, and that I may revoke my consent at any time (except to the extent that the information has already been released).

Signature of Client

Date of client request

Signature of Witness

Date

Appendix D: Written Consent

Counselling is a confidential process designed to help you address your concerns, come to a greater understanding of yourself, and learn effective personal and interpersonal coping strategies.

Confidentiality is an essential part of guidance and counselling. All aspects of your participation especially in counselling services at the Guidance & Counselling Unit of Bolgatanga Technical University including the scheduling of appointments, the content of counselling sessions, and any records that we keep, are confidential.

Limits of Confidentiality: Your counsellor may consult with other guidance and counselling staff to provide the best possible care, but your identity will be disguised.

- If there is suspected child abuse, elder abuse, or dependent adult abuse.
- If there is evidence of clear and imminent danger of harm to self and/or others
- If there is a court order or subpoena requesting a release of your counselling records
- Clients under 18 years do not have full confidentiality from their parents.
- It is also important to be aware of other potential limits of confidentiality that include the following:
 - a) Hard copy records are stored in locked cabinets and soft copies are stored in secured electronic devices.
 - b) Electronic communication can compromise your confidentiality, (E-mail is not a preferred way of communication). Cell phones and

faxes may be used on some occasions.

Termination of Treatment: Counselling services are voluntary (except otherwise sanctioned by the University) and clients can withdraw from the services at any time.

Services may be terminated when:

- i. The client has achieved the therapeutic goals,
- ii. Counsellors assess that the therapy is not beneficial to the client,
- iii. The client is unable to meet four (4) appointments or make several cancelations,
- iv. A referral is made to another provider,
- v. The client has left/completed Bolgatanga Technical University.

The termination of counselling service must be a joint decision of the client and counsellor with respect to the client's autonomy.

I have read, understood, and discussed the above information with the counsellor. I understand the risks and benefits of counselling, the nature and limits of confidentiality, and what is expected of me as a client of the University Guidance and Counselling Unit.

Client's Name:

Signature

Date:

Counsellor's Name:

Signature: -----Date:-----