



20 November 2018

RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION

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Dear Ms Cummings

Your freedom of information request

Thank you for your email of 12 November 2018 requesting information about the University's mental health support services for students.

The University of Edinburgh and our context

The University of Edinburgh is a global university, rooted in Scotland. We are globally recognised for our research, development and innovation and we have provided world-class teaching to our students for more than 425 years. We are the largest university in Scotland and in 2016/17 our annual revenue was £929 million, of which £265 million was research income. We have over 39,000 students and over 9,700 full-time equivalent staff. We are a founding member of the UK's Russell Group of leading research universities and a member of the League of European Research Universities.

The University is committed to providing a positive academic experience and equality of opportunity for all students, and encourages those encountering mental health difficulties to make these known to the University. In 2017 we introduced our *Student Mental Health Strategy*, published at www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/student-support, which articulates the University's commitment to promoting good mental health and supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties. It sets out the University's vision, objectives, strengths, areas for development, and initiatives to implement in the period 2017 to 2019.

The University operates a devolved management structure and comprises three academic colleges, subdivided into twenty-two schools, and three support groups, subdivided into some seventy support services. Central services that support students with mental health conditions include the Student Disability Service (SDS), the Chaplaincy and the University Counselling Service. Further information about each of these is provided below.

Colleges, Schools, Personal Tutors and Student Support Teams

The University operates a framework of academic and pastoral support for students which comprises a blend of localised provision within schools and colleges, the Personal Tutor System, and student support services. Personal tutors (PTs) assist and encourage students in their academic studies and help students to feel part of a community of learners. One of the main responsibilities of student support teams (SSTs) is to provide appropriate information to students, which can include directing students to local and central support services. Academic and pastoral support within a school or college is provided to all its students. Each school informs their students about the academic and pastoral support available to them and how to access it. Schools identify when and where the need for targeted support may be at its most acute and concentrate provision accordingly. Please note that mental health support provision provided by the University is intended to supplement and enhance, rather than replace or duplicate, NHS provision. More information about the Personal Tutor System and student support teams is published at www.ed.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students.

The Advice Place

The Edinburgh University Students' Association's Advice Place offers students free, impartial and confidential information delivered by a professional advice team. The Students' Association is a separate legal entity from the University of Edinburgh, and is not a 'Scottish public authority' as defined by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. This means that the University is unable to answer requests for information held by the Students' Association, and the Students' Association itself is not subject to the legislation. If you are seeking information from the Students' Association, or wish to read more about the Advice Place, contact details and information are available online at www.eusa.ed.ac.uk.

Student Disability Service

The SDS provides support to students with mental health conditions in a number of ways depending on the student's study needs. SDS can tailor a learning profile of adjustments for students which can include adjustments such as extra time in exams, extensions, lecture slides in advance, permission to record lectures, and equipment to study at home. SDS can also suggest study skills support for students if appropriate. This might be through the University's Institute of Academic Development study skills tutors, which are available to all students or through one of their Mental Health Mentors who offer emotional and study skills support to students with significant and long-standing mental health issues which impact on the students' course of study. Further information about the support offered by the SDS and how students can access support is published on the University website at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service.

Chaplaincy

The University's Chaplaincy provides pastoral and spiritual support for students and staff of all faiths and none. Support includes the provision of mindfulness meditation sessions, tai chi classes, various religious services and prayer sessions, opportunities for individual meetings with chaplains, and discussions and events which touch on mental health. Further information about the services offered by the Chaplaincy and how students can access support is published on the University website at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/chaplaincy.

University Counselling Service

The University Counselling Service provides free confidential professional counselling service to staff and all matriculated students of the University of Edinburgh. The Service also seeks to enhance and encourage the emotional well-being and mental health of University of Edinburgh students and those who support them. The Service seeks to reach this objective by facilitating personal development and psychoeducational groups and workshops for students; encouraging students to support themselves through the Bibliotherapy Scheme and other online resources; offering advice and support to academic staff concerned for the mental and emotional well-being of their students; and contributing to training and development programmes organised for staff and students by other departments of the University. The University has signed up to the Big White Wall initiative which allows University of Edinburgh students free access to 24 hour psychological support online: www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling/self-help/support-groups. The Service offers some form of help to all students who approach them. The nature of the help depends on the outcome of the initial appointment between student and counsellor. Further information about the services offered by the University Counselling Service and how students can access support is available on the University website at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling/services.

The University Counselling Service is an organisational member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). This is the leading professional body for counsellors and psychotherapists in the United Kingdom, with approximately 44,000 members. Since 2006 the Service has had Accredited Service status awarded by the BACP. The BACP Service Accreditation Scheme provides status and validation for the accredited service, and also provides robust evidence of service quality and professionalism. In addition, accredited services are bound by the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. All BACP Accredited Services have demonstrated a high quality of service delivery, meeting benchmark standards that are maintained by annual monitoring and reporting.

The University Counselling Service also provides training for Personal Tutors, Student Support Officers, other academic staff as well as welfare staff in the Students' Association aimed at helping staff support and refer students who have mental and emotional health problems. Accommodation Services has a Residence Life Team who will support students living in University Managed Accommodation and link them with other University services as appropriate. All staff are made aware of the 'Helping Distressed Students' guide which is available on the University's website to aid staff in dealing with students in distress or crisis at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/staff/supporting-students/help-distressed-students.

Funding for mental health support services (question 1)

You asked about the funding for the University's mental health support services.

In April 2016, the University committed to invest an additional £140,000 in student counselling between 2016 and 2018. This was publicised on our website at www.ed.ac.uk/news/2017/strategy-to-boost-support-for-mental-health. £70,000 was made available to the Service in 2016/17 and £70,000 was made available in 2017/18. This funding was spent on the creation of two new counselling posts.

I have provided information about the student counselling budget in Table 1 below. The budget has been used for operational spend, salaries, refurbishment and expansion projects, and publishing and mental health promotional materials costs. I have also provided separate spend for the online mental health support service Big White Wall (BWW), The University's contract with BWW between 2014 and 2017 was based on pay per individual usage, therefore the annual spend varied according to the number of individual students accessing the BWW each year. This was changed to a licence agreement for the 2017/18 academic year. More information about Big White Wall is published on its website at www.bigwhitewall.com/landing-pages/landingV3.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f#.WZq-ZWeWxes.

Table 1: University Counselling Service budgets, 2012/13 to 2017/18

Financial year	Amount (£s)	
	Budget value	BWW
2012/13	616,699	0
2013/14	807,439	0
2014/15	897,603	63,840
2015/16	950,723	55,920
2016/17	1,043,835	51,000
2017/18	1,064,458	24,000

Table notes:

- The University's financial year run from 1 August to 31 July
- *BWW* spend relates to the academic year for which the service is provided, rather than the academic year in which the payment was made.

The Student Disability Service supports all students who have any kind of disability, learning difficulty or health condition (mental or physical) that affects their studies. No part of their budget is specifically designated solely to the support of students with mental health problems.

Similarly, the Chaplaincy's budget supports all aspects of their work providing pastoral and spiritual support for students and staff of all faiths and none. However, you may be interested to know that in 2017/18 the Chaplaincy received £10,000 specifically to fund mindfulness courses for students and staff. The eight-week course helps individuals to develop 'mindfulness'. Mindfulness increases moment-to-moment awareness so that we can notice and change ingrained automatic reactions. This enables the individual to respond creatively to stress and difficulty with more choice.

The majority of people completing the programme reported lasting physical and emotional/psychological benefits including:

- An increased ability to relax
- Greater energy and enthusiasm for life
- Heightened self-confidence
- An increased ability to cope more effectively with both short and long-term busyness and stressful situations
- Balance and resilience in life and work situations

Further information is available online at www.ed.ac.uk/chaplaincy/wellbeing-and-mindfulness.

Numbers of students seeking support (question 3)

You asked how many students sought support from the University's mental health services in each year from 2012/13 to 2017/18.

The numbers of students who disclosed a disability to the University, and therefore receive support from the Student Disability Service, are available online in the SDS annual reports at www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/about/annual-reports. The statistics are broken down by disability category (including 'mental health problems'). However, please note that a proportion of those students who disclose an 'unseen disability', 'multiple disabilities' or a 'disability not listed above' may have mental health conditions.

The Chaplaincy does not record the number of students who approach them for support with mental health issues and they do not record the number of staff or students accessing their services.

Every student that approaches the University Counselling Service receives help. Students may access the 'self-help' resources described online at www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling/self-help, and/or they may 'self-refer' by completing the referral form. The numbers of students accessing support are published in the Counselling Service annual reports, available online at www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling/about/annual-reports. When published, the 2017/18 annual report will show that there were 3,399 individual referrals and 656 attendances at workshops and group events.

Student statistics (question 2)

You asked how many students enrolled at the University in each academic year from 2012/13 to 2017/18.

The information is accessible through the University publication scheme at www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/freedom-information/published-information/student-experience/statistics/number.

Technical exemption

Please note that as some of this information is available to you through the University website, it is technically exempt from the University's obligation to answer requests for information under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The information is exempt under section 25 of this Act, because it is available to you by another route. This exemption is a technical matter only and does not affect your ability to obtain the information on-line.

If you do not have access to the Internet or would prefer to receive information in hard copy please let me know and I will arrange for printouts from the appropriate web pages to be sent to you.

Right to review

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may ask the University to conduct a review of this decision by contacting the University's Records Management Section (www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/about/contact) in writing (e.g. by letter or email) or in some other recorded form (e.g. audio or video tape). You should describe the original request, explain your grounds for dissatisfaction, and include an address for correspondence. You have 40 working days from receipt of this letter to submit a review request. When the review process has been completed, if you are still dissatisfied, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner using the guidance at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you do not have access to the Internet, please let me know and I will provide a copy of the relevant web pages.

Privacy notice

The University of Edinburgh's privacy notice, which describes how we use the information you have supplied about yourself and your request, is available on-line at www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/freedom-information/make-a-request/privacy-notice.

Yours sincerely



Anne Grzybowski
Information Compliance Manager

If you require this letter in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact the Records Management Section on 0131 651 4099 or email recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk