



Brisbane Grammar School

Counselling Policy

Practices and Procedures

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1 Underlying philosophy

Counselling at Brisbane Grammar School (the **School**) is offered to assist students to develop appropriate skills and attitudes and resolve problems in relation to personal, career and/or academic issues. Counselling is provided within the framework of the School community, involving staff and parents as required.

The School counsellors are members of the School's Student Wellbeing Team, and consequently work within a team-based framework. "Student wellbeing" refers to the promotion and maintenance of effective learning, positive mental health, good physical health, and the social wellbeing of students within the School's care. School counsellors are geographically located within the School in a purpose built facility to ensure transparency.

Staff may also access counselling through an independent, professional and confidential employee assistance program funded by the School (see Section 9 – **Staff counselling** below).

2 Counselling services

Student counselling is provided in respect of three broad areas:

- Personal issues;
- Career issues; and
- Academic issues.

2.1 Personal counselling

Personal counselling services vary according to need, but may be concerned with:

- Developmental and mental health issues;
- Interpretation of educational and psychological reports;
- Addressing and resolving specific problems;
- Making decisions;
- Stress management;
- Coping with crisis;
- Developing personal insights and knowledge; and
- Improving relationships with others.

2.2 Career counselling

Careers services and education is a vital component of students exploring their options and managing their future planning.

The School aims to ensure that every student has access to individual careers counselling to discuss tertiary aspirations and future goals. The Careers Room in The Lilley Centre houses

comprehensive print resources for senior students, and support and guidance is provided for students to access online resources

The School utilises social networking to provide information about tertiary options via closed groups on Facebook and Twitter. Students and parents are encouraged to attend a series of events and information evenings which provide up to date information on post-school options.

2.3 Academic counselling/Academic Services

Academic counselling is provided to students who may be experiencing difficulties with their studies. Discussion with a School counsellor can help students identify their areas of difficulty and develop strategies to facilitate improvement in their academic performance.

Discussion with a School counsellor may lead to a referral to Academic Services to offer structured learning opportunities for students who may require additional assistance. The name “Academic Services” reflects the cooperation between the Studies Directorate and Student Wellbeing areas of the School in the management of student learning. Academic Services incorporates areas such as students at risk, academic disadvantage, provisions for elite performers, and policies for dealing with disability issues, unsatisfactory progress and special provisions. Students who access Academic Services are required to supply documentation supporting their access as requested by Academic Services.

3 Referrals

A student will generally attend counselling on a voluntary basis. However, situations may arise where the School will request or require a student to attend counselling, for example, where there are concerns about a student’s wellbeing.

3.1 Referrals to School counsellor

Referrals may be made in one of three ways:

- By the Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster(s), Head of Middle School, Director of Student Services, Director of Boarding, the Head(s) of Year, or teachers (normally after consultation with the relevant Head of Year);
- Self-referral by the student; or
- By a parent (normally after consultation with the relevant Head of Year, Head of Middle School, Director of Student Services, Deputy Headmaster(s) or Headmaster).

3.2 Referrals to external health providers

Where the School in its absolute discretion determines it is necessary or appropriate, a student

(through his parents) may be requested to attend for counselling or other treatment by external health providers. This may occur for a number of reasons, for example where the nature, frequency and/or duration of the required intervention means it is not appropriate for the School counsellors to provide the service.

Where the School makes a request for a student to attend treatment by an external health provider, the following guidelines will be followed:

- The request will be discussed with the student and/or his parent/s and the rationale for the request explained;
- The student and his parent/s will be provided with the name(s) of one or more suitable health providers, but may choose to consult with whichever health provider they wish to;
- The student's parents will be responsible for payment of the external health provider's fees;
- The School counsellor will facilitate the referral if requested to do so, and with consent of the student (through his parents), will be entitled to provide such reports kept by the School to the external health provider as are, in the School's opinion, reasonably necessary; and
- The School counsellor may be entitled to receive reports from the external health provider, as are reasonably necessary, to satisfy the School counsellor that the issues requiring the student's attendance on the external health provider have been satisfactorily resolved, or are being managed to the School's satisfaction.

The parents and the student will be expected to agree to a request by the School for counselling or other treatment by an external health provider unless, in the School's reasonable opinion, there are reasons why such counselling or other treatment is unnecessary or inappropriate.

4 Therapies and interventions

4.1 Types of therapies and interventions

When counselling a student, a School counsellor will provide only recognised therapies and interventions. These may include cognitive, behavioural, family, narrative, and solution-focused approaches. In many cases, the given therapy/intervention will be a blend of approaches which focus on supportive, short-term, problem-centred outcomes.

In some cases, a need may be identified for a student to undergo psychometric assessments (e.g. I.Q., memory cognitive/aptitude, personality/behavioural tests). Given the significant amount of resources and time required for the administration, interpretation, and reporting of such

assessments, parents will generally be advised that they should be carried out by external private psychologists. A School counsellor may provide the names of suitable practitioners if requested. In such cases, the assessments will be at the parents' expense.

However, in certain situations, and at the School's absolute discretion (after consultation with and agreement of the Deputy Headmaster - Students or Head of Middle School and Director of Student Services), some assessments may be carried out by a school counsellor. Such assessments will be performed only with parental consent and agreement by the student, and the results will be shared with parents and relevant staff.

4.2 Duration/frequency of consultation

Consultation with a School counsellor will generally take place during class time, unless otherwise agreed with the counsellor. The duration of each consultation will generally be for no longer than one lesson (maximum). It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that consultations do not clash with scheduled assessment tasks.

The school operates a non-therapy model. As such, interventions requiring ongoing consultation will be notified to the Director of Student Services and/or Deputy Headmaster – Students or Head of Middle School, and appropriate referrals will be made to external specialists.

4.3 Joint interventions

Where it is considered appropriate, at the School's absolute discretion, joint interventions may be provided. This may involve one or more School counsellors jointly consulting with a student and members of his family. A joint intervention may also include the involvement of other appropriate staff. On occasions, groups of students may be required to consult with one or more School counsellors and other appropriate staff.

5 Confidentiality

5.1 Students

Discussions (including records of discussions) with a School counsellor are confidential, except where in the reasonable opinion of the School counsellor:

- There is a concern that the student will cause himself harm;
- There is a concern that the student will cause harm to another person;
- The student discloses that another person is at risk of significant harm;
- The student discloses criminal activity that may impact on the welfare of the student, or others, or the reputation of the School;
- The student discloses that he has suffered harm, or the counsellor reasonably suspects

that the student has suffered harm;

- It is necessary or appropriate to consult and/or seek advice from other School counsellors, the Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster (Students), Head of Middle School or Director of Student Services, or to seek external legal advice, about issues involving the student (for example the need for reporting under the School's *Child Protection Policy and Child Risk Management Strategy*, or for referral to another School counsellor or an external health provider); and/or
- It is otherwise required by law (for example responding to a subpoena or giving in evidence in court).

Where necessary, it will be explained to students and/or parents that the above exceptions are required by law, to comply with School policies, for the School to discharge its duty of care to students, or for the proper performance of a school counsellor's responsibilities and administration of the School (as referred to in section 6 – "**Accountabilities**" below).

5.2 Parent/s

Where necessary, students will be informed that to facilitate good communication between the School and home, and to enhance the effectiveness of the School counsellor's role, it may be in the best interests of the student that his parent/s be informed that he is seeing a School counsellor. It is the responsibility of either the referrer or the School counsellor to inform the student's parent/s.

Student counsellors, in the course of their work, may liaise with the student's parent/s in managing the student. Additionally, it may also be considered necessary or appropriate by the Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster - Students or Head of Middle School, for a School counsellor to meet with a student's parent/s to discuss issues affecting the student.

If a student specifically requests that his parent/s not be informed that he is seeing the counsellor, the student may consult with the School counsellor without his parent/s' knowledge only if the School counsellor and Director of Student Services (or if the School counsellor is the Director of Student Services, then the Headmaster or his delegate) are satisfied that it is in the best interests of the student that he receive counselling and that his parents not be informed. The School counsellor and the Director of Student Services or Headmaster (or his delegate) may reassess and change their decision about this at any time. Where appropriate, the student may be encouraged to reconsider his position by a School counsellor explaining the rationale for parental involvement.

Despite a student requesting his parents not be informed, where the School in its absolute discretion determines it is necessary or appropriate, a student's parent/s may be informed of the student's request for counselling and/or any counselling provided to the student.

6 Accountabilities

The School counsellors have both professional and administrative accountabilities.

6.1 Professional accountabilities

It is imperative that appropriate records of counselling provided to students be maintained. As a minimum, the School counsellors' records must record the student's name, the date of each consultation, the persons present at the consultation, and a brief account of the main issues discussed. Similar records should also be kept in regard to meetings and/or telephone conversations with parents, staff, and external health providers regarding the student.

Each School counsellor must record all counselling appointments in an electronic calendar, and those appointments must be visible by the other School counsellors. The School counsellors will meet regularly with each other to discuss the number of students who have consulted with them and, where necessary or appropriate, to discuss any issues about particular students, such as the need to refer students either to another School counsellor, or externally.

All School counsellors are required to engage in professional peer supervision as required by their relevant professional bodies.

6.2 Administrative accountabilities

To ensure appropriate communication and accountability within the School, the School counsellors are members of the Student Wellbeing Team and report to the Director of Student Services. The School counsellors will meet with the Director of Student Services on a fortnightly basis (unless otherwise agreed and advised to the Headmaster) to provide feedback generally on the provision of counselling within the School and specifically (as necessary or appropriate) on individual matters.

A meeting will also be held once a term with the School counsellors, the Director of Student Services, the Deputy Headmaster – Students, and/or the Head of Middle School to report on the provision of counselling within the School and specifically (as necessary or appropriate) on individual matters.

7 Records/Access

All counselling records must be stored electronically within the School's network but accessible only by the relevant School counsellor and the Headmaster. Other than in exceptional circumstances, a School counsellor's records will only be accessed by the Headmaster in consultation with the relevant School counsellor.

The records of the School counsellor are at all times the property of the School. If a School

counsellor leaves the School, his or her records will remain with the School and will be securely and confidentially archived under the guidance of the Deputy Headmaster - Students. His or her counselling records may only be accessed by the Headmaster and the other remaining School counsellor/s.

Access to a student's counselling records by the particular student, his parent/s, or third parties will only be granted where legal and privacy obligations are met. For more information, refer to the School's *Privacy Policy*.

8 Child protection

As is required of all staff members of the School, the School counsellors are required to be familiar and comply with the School's policies for child protection, including the *Child Protection Policy and Child Risk Management Strategy* and *Staff Code of Conduct*.

School counsellors play a key role in implementing the School's child risk management strategies, including the identification and reporting of harm and inappropriate behaviour, and providing support to students and parents.

9 Staff counselling

The School is committed to looking after its staff and to ensuring it provides a healthy and supportive workplace. As part of that commitment, the School funds a professional and confidential counselling service for all employees which is free of charge.

This service is provided by an independent, external company called Davidson Trahaire Corpsych. Their counsellors are all qualified, experienced professionals who have extensive training in counselling and workplace consulting. These external EAP counsellors can assist with a wide range of personal or work-related issues.

The service operates on a self-referral basis. This means staff can contact the service directly without needing to inform anyone at the School. The service is completely confidential unless disclosure is required by law (for example responding to a subpoena or giving in evidence in court).

Staff may contact Davidson Trahaire Corpsych directly on 1300 360 364.

10 Contact information

If you have any questions regarding this policy please contact Deputy Headmaster - Students.

11 Policy management

Document management	Dean of Administration & Curriculum	
Approved by	Board of Trustees Brisbane Grammar School	
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