

**Imperial College Union
Advice Service
Conflict of Interest Policy**

Free | Confidential | Independent | Impartial | Informative

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy identifies conflicts of interest and provides guidance on managing these within the Imperial College Union (ICU) Advice Service.

1.2 A conflict of interest occurs when an Advice Caseworker cannot remain impartial or perceives a risk of being seen as biased.

1.3 An Advice Caseworker must raise potential conflicts of interest as soon as they are recognised. If unsure, the caseworker should consult with the Advice Manager.

2. Scenarios

2.1 There are five main scenarios where a conflict of interest might occur:

- A. A student has already sought advice, and another involved in the same dispute or case seeks advice.
- B. A student is a friend or acquaintance of an Advice Caseworker.
- C. A student has a complaint against ICU services or is involved in an ICU disciplinary process.
- D. A student wants to complain about the ICU Advice Service or is facing a disciplinary about behavior towards advice team staff.
- E. A student wants to complain about an individual staff member

3. Action to be Taken

3.1 The Advice Caseworker must inform the student about the potential conflict as soon as it is recognised. Specific actions for each scenario are outlined below.

3.2 (A) The service may disclose the initial contact but not the details of the advice. No caseworker will represent more than one student in the same dispute. Efforts will be made to assign another caseworker for the second student. If unavailable, students will be directed to alternative support. Caseworkers will ensure confidentiality and impartiality, sharing only contact details for referrals. Cases will be locked in AdvicePro to restrict access to case notes to the assigned caseworker only. On occasion the service might employ external advisors or co-opted staff from other union advice services if appropriate.

3.3 (B) The caseworker must disclose the policy to the student and seek written consent to proceed. If consent is given, the student will be referred to another caseworker. This policy also applies to relationships with current or former sabbatical officers.

3.4 (C) If the complaint the student wants to make, or the disciplinary they are facing is unrelated to the ICU Advice Service, the caseworker may assist as usual after discussing it

with the Advice Manager. For these complaints and disciplinary processes, no discussions with investigating staff or panels should occur without the student's consent.

3.5 (D) Complaints relating to the Advice Service, or disciplinary action about behaviour towards the advice service will not be supported however general guidance on processes can be made available.

3.6 (E) Where students want to make a complaint about any individual member of staff of the union, we will offer a pre-written guide but no further advice on this due to the relationships between staff of the service and their co-workers.

4.1 A student can ask for clarification on how we are ensuring risks of conflict of interest at any point by talking to their caseworker or the Advice Manager.