



Terms of Service

Highlands and Islands Students' Association - Advice Service

1. Introduction

The Highland and Islands Students' Association Advice Service (the Advice Service) offers advice and information to all current students at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and its Academic Partners – free, confidential and impartial advice.

The Advice Service provides advice on a wide range of issues including, but not limited to:

- **Academic Matters:** Academic appeals, complaints, academic misconduct, mitigating circumstances, fitness to practice and other academic matters.
- **Student Code of Conduct:** disciplinary proceedings and appeals.
- **Housing Matters:** University Accommodation Disciplinary proceedings, including appeals and private tenancy support, which includes practical advice and support regarding contracts, deposits, and disrepair.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. If the Advice Service is unable to help or advise, we will do our best to signpost to the appropriate organisation.

The Advice Service can offer signposting to services both on and off campus for financial, health and employment advice.

This document outlines what you can expect from the service and what we expect from you as a user. The advice provided is not a substitute for professional legal, medical, or psychological advice, and clients should seek appropriate help if needed.

It should be noted that by using the Advice Service, you agree to the terms in this document and our Privacy Statement, Confidentiality Policy and Complaints Procedure. The policies and procedures can be found on the student association website and in the Appendix of this document.

2. Services that we are unable to advise on

The Advice Service will aim to provide the best advice and support; however, there are some areas where we are unable to impart support:

- Immigration or Visa advice
- Legal advice or advocacy

- Emotional / Psychological counselling
- Mediation between flatmates
- Housing Tribunal
- Employment Issues/Disciplinaries

If you require support on any of the issues listed above, we will signpost you to the appropriate organisation.

3. Who can access the Service

We support UHI students currently registered with the UHI and any of their Academic Partners.¹ We also can support:

- Recent students of UHI and its Academic Partners (graduated or withdrawn) whose case has continued past their enrolment. Please note that if your student status changes, we will keep your case open until an outcome is reached.
- Prospective students of the UHI and any of its academic partners who have a conditional or unconditional offer.

4. Accessibility / Reasonable Adjustments

We will seek reasonable adjustments if you request them and inform our staff of any health issues or disability. If making certain adjustments is impractical, we will consult you and consider other more feasible alternatives. If you have any concerns regarding reasonable adjustments, please discuss this further with us.

For British Sign Language (BSL) users, we now offer the option to contact the service via Contact Scotland-BSL, the free interpreting video relay service. This allows BSL users to communicate with us through a BSL/English interpreter using video calls. More information on how to use this service can be found on their [website](#).

5. Equal Opportunities

The student association is actively committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in its activities, employment practices, and service provision for its members. Accordingly, the Advice Service will not discriminate on the grounds of sex, marital status, race or ethnicity, colour, nationality, disability, trade union activity, sexual orientation, age, language, gender identity, family responsibility, socioeconomic background, HIV/AIDS status, religious or political belief. We are committed to equal opportunities for all individuals who use the Advice Service.

¹ Academic Partners within whom there is associated membership, we will aim to support clients where possible, but our service might be limited in advocacy.

6. How the service is delivered

The Advice Service will aim to respond to enquiries within five working days (or sooner) and arrange a meeting with clients virtually, where necessary. We will inform you if it takes us longer to provide a complete response to your enquiry. If we are experiencing an exceptionally high workload, we may be unable to assist you. If this is the case, we will inform you of alternative options.

Clients should aim to contact the service directly so that we can collect information and manage the case appropriately. Advice will be provided one-to-one; consequently, group appointments will not be available.

6.1 Service Operations

The Advice Service is open five days a week, Monday through Friday, between 09.00 and 17.00, excluding student association, University, and Academic Partner closure days, national holidays, and staff development days.

The Advice Service retains affiliations, memberships, or subscriptions to various organisations to further its work. These include Advice UK, the National Union of Students (NUS Scotland), Shelter Scotland and Wonkhe.

The work of the Advice Service is insured by our Professional Indemnity Insurance policy currently held with Advice UK Insurance Services to the sum of £500 thousand. We have incurred no professional indemnity claims in the last two years, and no existing circumstances may give rise to a PII claim.

6.2 Contacting the HISA Advice Service

The Advice Service encourages students to engage with us virtually in the first instance. We will continue to review this as the term progresses and will provide updates as appropriate.

Clients can contact the Advice Service through various channels to ensure accessibility. We appreciate that clients do not always operate during regular working hours due to studies or caring responsibilities. Therefore, we aim to accommodate clients where possible.

Options to communicate via phone or virtual meeting are to help accommodate our members who are studying remotely or who may be on placements, working, or caring for family/children, and a face-to-face meeting is not suitable.

a) Email

Clients can submit email enquiries to the service, and they will be subject to triage—to assess how the enquiry can be dealt with, such as whether a reply

by email is appropriate or whether a client should be invited to a virtual appointment.

Our contact email is HISA.advice@uhi.ac.uk.

We kindly ask that email enquiries contain a description of the issue and any attached deadlines. In addition, when making first contact, clients should aim to send any documents, e-mails, letters, and other materials relevant to the case, as the details in these items may be central to the advice provided.

The Advice Service recommends that clients use their university email addresses for security purposes for correspondence. However, if the client cannot access their university email address due to suspension or other reasons, they can contact the service through their personal email.

Clients should note that email is not always a secure method of contact, but student association staff will make every reasonable effort to ensure that communications remain confidential and secure.

b) Online Form

You can complete the Initial Enquiry form using this [link](#). However, please be aware that it may take 3 – 5 working days for us to reply to your enquiry.

If the matter is urgent, please contact the service via email.

c) Telephone / Virtual Appointments

Appointments are available. We encourage students to make appointments virtually via Teams or by telephone. The contact number is 07894907024. However, advisers will arrange all appointments once initial contact is made, so students should make contact via our email address or online form (see above).

d) Walk-In

You are welcome to attend any of our Student Association offices and ask to access our Advice Service. A student association staff member can help you access the service or provide details about what we can do and how you can get in touch.

e) WhatsApp

Clients can submit text enquiries to the service via WhatsApp, and they will be subject to triage—to assess how the enquiry can be dealt with, such as replies by email or whether a client should be invited to a virtual appointment.

6.3 Written Confirmation of Advice

Clients will receive written confirmation of the advice provided during the advice process. This will allow the client to consider the advice and their options at their

leisure. The written confirmation will also provide evidence against any claims of inadequate advice. After each consultation, an adviser will confirm their advice by emailing the client to their preferred contact address. The written confirmation should include a summary of the issue discussed, the intended course of action, and any relevant timescales. This will be confirmed in writing if a client wants to change a proposed course of action.

6.4 Reciprocal Support Agreement with Strathclyde University

The Advice Service has established a reciprocal agreement with Strathclyde University Students Union Advice Service to ensure continuity of service and support for students. This agreement allows for mutual coverage of advice services when HISA staff may be unavailable due to illness, leave, or other unforeseen circumstances.

In such instances, Strathclyde Students Union Advice Service staff will provide advice and guidance, ensuring no disruption to students needing support. This arrangement ensures that:

- Students will continue to receive timely advice and information, even during periods of staff absence.
- Any cases handled by Strathclyde staff will be treated with the same level of confidentiality and professionalism as if handled by HISA advisors.
- HISA will ensure that all relevant case details are securely transferred to Strathclyde staff, with the student's consent, to facilitate a seamless transition in case management.

If students prefer to wait for a HISA advisor to become available, they may choose to delay receiving advice; however, we encourage students to use this service to avoid any delays in urgent matters.

Students are welcome to contact HISA directly for more information or to express any concerns regarding this arrangement.

7. User Conduct

Please note that the service will not usually act on your behalf or complete any paperwork, but we will support you in taking action yourself. The purpose of the service is to provide the best information and advice for clients to make their own decisions.

We must have all the facts and information about your circumstances to provide accurate advice. Therefore, we ask that you be open and honest so we can provide more straightforward and more specific advice.

7.1. Withdrawal of Service

As a last result, we may withdraw access to our service from a client when specific issues arise, and the client fails to adhere to fair user conduct. If the service is withdrawn, the advisor will signpost the client to alternative sources of advice and support. If an adviser, following discussion and agreement with the student association CEO, wishes to withdraw service from a client, then the client will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for it. Whether they want to challenge this decision, they will be directed towards the HISA's Complaints Handling Procedure to raise the matter for formal resolution.

Please refrain from doing the following when using the service to avoid withdrawal of service:

a) Excessive communications:

We kindly request that you manage email communications and refrain from sending excessive emails to our advisers. Our advisers will prioritise workload according to urgency, and where deadlines apply, we will always try to advise within this timeframe. However, when excessive communication is made, it can slow down the process of helping you and other cases.

b) Missed appointments:

Clients booking appointments with our service are responsible for attending on time and bringing relevant information. Missed appointments are defined as appointments that are not cancelled with 24 hours' notice before the scheduled start time or if you are more than 15 minutes late to an appointment without notice.

c) Inappropriate requests:

Inappropriate requests include but are not limited to, repeated requests for assistance that exceed advisers' expertise or long-term support demands that require substantial staff time, which would be detrimental to other cases taken on by the advice service.

d) Third-party advice:

If the Advice Service becomes aware that a client is receiving advice on the same matter from another organisation and this interferes with the service's work, our service will be withdrawn.

e) Inappropriate behaviour:

The Advice Service has a zero-tolerance policy for rude or disrespectful behaviour. If a client or member of the public engages in this type of behaviour, we reserve the right to refuse or withdraw service.

8. Data Collection & Management

The Advice Service is fully committed to compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 requirements and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). The student association will follow procedures to ensure that all staff members with access to personal data know their duties under the Data Protection Act.

The Advice Service must collect and use user information to operate efficiently and effectively. Therefore, only data relevant to the service's operational work will be collected.

We will only use collected data for the following purposes:

- Provide the advice you require for the organisation to undertake quality assurance.
- Monitor clients' issues and use this information to support evidence-led action on their behalf to address common problems.
- Ask you for feedback on our service after the completion of your case.
- Produce statistical reports on the use of our service.

When booking or contacting the service online, clients fill out a form asking for personal information. By submitting the form, they agree to HISA Terms and Conditions and consent to sharing their data in accordance with the HISA Privacy Statement.

Our full Privacy Statement and Confidentiality Policies are available to clients at any time via the student association website or upon request.

8.1 Case Recording

All case files must remain precise and current. The notes must indicate the current stage of the case and the necessary actions required by the client and/or advisor.

Case notes should be recorded on the client's file at the earliest opportunity, with care taken to accurately record the date and time of notes to ensure logical order to the case file. The notes should include the duration of case management, advice delivery method, source of advice, background information of the case and advice provided to the student.

All relevant documentation, including correspondence with the student, should be uploaded to the case file. Cases and enquiries should be reviewed regularly and closed immediately after they conclude.

8.2 Storage

Per Article 6 of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, the Advice Service has a legitimate interest in processing information relevant to your case or enquiry. Accordingly, we will process your information for six years to satisfy your interests and those of Advice Service.

9. Confidentiality / Privacy

We believe all clients have the right to confidentiality to protect their interests and maintain a relationship of trust between the client and the Service.

Information relating to individual users of the Advice Service will be recorded in the casework system, which is only accessible to Advice staff. No personal information regarding a client shall be given out directly or indirectly to any external organisation without the client's explicit consent. For example, staff within the Advice Service will not contact or provide information to parents/guardians, course coordinator/personal tutors or any authority without prior consent from the client. The client reserves the right to withdraw this consent by informing us via phone, email or in person.

9.1 Breach of Confidentiality

Sometimes, an adviser may need to breach the usual confidentiality policy. Examples of these instances include an adviser feels a client is at risk of harming themselves or others; an adviser has received information that may help prevent acts of terrorism or apprehend a terrorist, where there is a court order requiring disclosure.

There is no duty of disclosure for other potential criminal offences. However, aiding or enticing a crime is an offence.

If an adviser feels that confidentiality should be breached for one of the above reasons, the adviser must discuss the issue with the student association CEO. If the CEO deems it necessary to disclose client information to an outside body, then a specific and limited disclosure may occur. All details of the disclosure shall be recorded in the casework system. If the CEO is unavailable, the adviser may seek authorisation from another senior management team member.

10. Data Access Requests

Clients with open cases may ask for access to their records anytime. This can be provided on request. Clients with closed or archived files will need to complete a subject access request to gain access to their files. This must be written and include sufficient information to identify the client and source the information. A client requesting data access must receive a reply within 40 days if any necessary fee has been paid.

11. Feedback

The Advice Service welcomes feedback from past clients. Upon a case's closure, students will be sent a link to complete an online survey.

We request anonymous feedback and aim to ensure that all feedback is considered where possible.

12. Complaints

Complaints regarding the Advice Service should follow the HISA Complaints Procedure. They should be made in writing and emailed to HISA@uhi.ac.uk .

Appendix 1:

Confidentiality Policy

Highlands and Islands Students Association (HISA) – Advice Service

Policy Purpose

1.1 HISA Advice Service is committed to providing confidential advice. All service users have the right to confidentiality to protect their interests, and assuring confidentiality is necessary to maintain the service's credibility.

Conduct of the Advice Service

2.1 All HISA Advice staff must have a practical understanding of confidentiality concerning the service. Advice staff are responsible for noting this consent on the client's case notes.

2.2 In no instance shall a member of HISA staff advise a third party, including parent/guardian, if a student is attending UHI or has accessed the HISA Advice Service without the student's prior consent. Subject to what follows, no information about a client shall be given directly or indirectly to any third party who is not a member of HISA Advice staff without that client's express consent to the disclosure of such information.

2.3 We reserve the right to discuss case trends and larger issues raised, where appropriate, and with the client's consent.

2.4 No information will be given to any external agency, including UHI, without the client's express consent unless the provision of such information is required by law. The advice staff may, however, decide that information should be disclosed without consent if there is a safeguarding risk of immediate physical danger to the client or others.

2.5 Where Advice staff need to contact UHI staff on a client's behalf, the client will be asked for written or verbal consent. Consent via email needs to come via their UHI student email account. Only details essential to progressing a case will be shared, and only relevant departments will be contacted. Staff will always keep clients informed about the actions they are taking on their behalf.

2.6 Clients must complete a Representation Agreement Form when a staff member needs to contact a third party outside UHI. This includes private halls providers, letting agents, Student Finance, and local authorities. Before discussing the nature of a confidential query, all clients will be made aware of the confidentiality policy and when it will be broken.

2.7 Clients can withdraw the above consent to data sharing at any time by informing us via email.

2.8 Where clients ask that no contact be made with certain parties, this will be recorded and adhered to unless, in the circumstance, the information supplied cannot be verified or further information sought to provide accurate advice. In this situation, service may be withdrawn.

2.9 Clients have the right to see the information held on them by the Advice Service. Requests must be made in writing to hisa.advice@uhi.ac.uk or HISA, UHI House, Old Perth Road, Inverness, IV2 3JH. A response will be provided within five working days.

2.10 Documentation will be kept secure for a maximum of six years, after which time it will be destroyed using proper procedures in accordance with data protection legislation.

2.11 The Advice Service has established a reciprocal agreement with Strathclyde University Students Union Advice Service to ensure student continuity of service and support. This agreement allows for mutual coverage of advice services when HISA staff may be unavailable due to illness, leave, or other unforeseen circumstances. In such instances, Strathclyde Students Union Advice Service staff will provide advice and guidance, ensuring no disruption to students needing support.

This arrangement ensures that:

- Students will continue to receive timely advice and information, even during periods of staff absence.
- Any cases handled by Strathclyde staff will be treated with the same level of confidentiality and professionalism as if handled by HISA advisors.

HISA will ensure that all relevant case details are securely transferred to Strathclyde staff, with the student's consent, to facilitate a seamless transition in case management.

2.12 Students who prefer to wait for a HISA advisor to become available may choose to delay receiving advice; however, we encourage students to use this service to avoid any delays in urgent matters.

2.13 Students are welcome to contact HISA directly or express any concerns regarding this arrangement.

Breaching Confidentiality

3.1 The Advice Service understands confidentiality means that no information about a client shall be given directly or indirectly to a third party without the client's consent except in the following circumstances:

- Conflict of Interest—Where HISA identifies a potential conflict of interest that necessitates informing one party that we can no longer act on their behalf, this may draw attention to the fact that we are already acting on behalf of another party. In

these circumstances, the compromised party will be informed of the breach, and no further action will be disclosed.

- Where required by Act of Parliament.
- Where required by order of a Court of Law.
- Where an adviser believes there to be a substantial threat to life, either of the client or another person.

3.2 Where an adviser believes there may be a need to deliberately breach confidentiality, they should inform the client and line manager and take the necessary steps.

Death of a client

4.1 If a client has died, information relating to the records held by HISA should only be provided to the client's executor or personal representative. A note should be made on the case file where information is handed over. This is not considered a breach of confidentiality.

4.2 If the police contact us for information related to a suspicious death, ideally, staff should seek the executor's or personal representative's permission. However, if this person is unknown and the information may negatively impact the investigation, it can be released in the best interests of the deceased.

Statistics and Reporting

5.1 The Advice Service is committed to the statistical recording of its use to enable it to monitor the demand for the service and identify any practical or policy issues related to the Advice Service.

5.2 Advice staff is responsible for ensuring that all statistical records given to third parties are produced anonymously so that individuals cannot be recognised.

Policy adopted: November 2022

Reviewed: October 2024

Appendix 2:

Privacy Notice

Highlands and Islands Students Association (HISA) – Advice Service

Introduction

1.1 The Advice Service (“we, us, our”) of the Highlands and Islands Students’ Association offers independent and confidential assistance. To enable our Advisors to offer the best advice and support, they will need to collect your personal data and sometimes special categories (sensitive)² of personal data.

1.2 We promise to respect and protect any data you share with us; we won’t do anything with your data that you wouldn’t reasonably expect us to do when you contact us for support.

1.3 The Advice Service privacy statement should be read in conjunction with the HISA Privacy Statement.

1.4 The Information Commissioner's Office oversees data protection in the UK, and the main legislation that underpins it is the EU General Data Protection Regulations (2014) (GDPR).

Type of Data Collected

2.1 While providing you with advice and support, we may collect information such as:

- Your personal contact details, including email address and phone number
- Student ID number—We need this information to work with you, verify your student status, and ensure correct identification for any ongoing communication.
- Details of your academic partner and course

2.2 We may collect additional information to help you in your case, which you might disclose when requesting advice, such as:

- Nationality
- Personal health concerns
- Disabilities

² Special category data is anything related to your ethnic origin, religion, health (including disability), sexual orientation etc.

Please feel comfortable sharing sensitive data with us if it's related to your enquiry. Our staff will only request this information when it is necessary to provide you with advice and support. If you have any concerns about the data held by the University of Highlands and Islands, please get in touch with the Data Protection team.

Data Collection

3.1 We collect data about you in three ways:

- Directly from you (either via email, online booking form, via booking an appointment through the online enquiry form or in the course of advising you).
- Directly from a third party to whom you have consented to share information with us.
- Your student record, which, in accordance with our Data Share agreement with the University, gives us access to certain basic details about you. This includes your student number, name, student email, date of birth, sex, year of study, course and academic partner.

3.2 We may obtain your information if a third party refers you to our service. The third party may provide your details and request that we offer you advice or support. Upon receiving a referral, we will contact you to offer our services. We will document the referrer's details, the referral information, the details provided about you, and our contact with you.

Using Your Data

4.1 Your data will be used to:

- Contact you regarding an active case or enquiry you have lodged with us.
- Act on your behalf, with the appropriate permission, in matters with the University or identified third party.
- Manage your case record within our secure case management system.
- Provide reasonable advice services to you and support in progressing your case.
- Carry out legal duties (including providing information to others where necessary – see Disclosures section below).

4.2 We may also use your data anonymously (where your details cannot be identified) for monitoring and statistical analysis.

4.3 The Advice Service will never use your data for direct marketing purposes.

Data Retention

5.1 We will retain your data for six years following the closure of your case. We feel that a six-year retention period allows you to re-engage with our service throughout your time at College and University.

Data Storage and Security

6.1 We will collect and securely store personal and special categories of data made available to the Advisors by reasonably applying our services.

6.2 We process your data for our records, which are stored electronically externally to the Union and the University servers. We use a third-party processor, AdvicePro, to store and look up the personal data we collect about you. You can view their Privacy Notice here. Only trained members of staff who need to access relevant personal data will be authorised and able to do so.

6.3 Any emails or handwritten notes relating to you will be securely destroyed once uploaded to AdvicePro. Any documentation not stored on AdvicePro will be kept in your Adviser's secure personal drive.

6.4 We will never use the information about you for marketing purposes.

Disclosure of your Data

7.1 The Advice Service may share your relevant personal data with the following bodies where we have a lawful basis to do so:

- The University of Highlands and Islands and/or relevant academic partner - where we must protect your vital interest (protect your life) or have signed consent.
- Police Scotland - where we have a duty to protect your vital interest (protect your life) or where processing is necessary for us to perform a task in the public interest, and the task has a clear basis in law.

Your Rights Over your Data

8.1 You have the right to see the information we hold on you, change any incorrect facts, and have your data erased. If you want to exercise any of these rights, please contact us, and we will walk you through the process.

8.2 You have the right to object to us processing your data as described in this policy and in conjunction with the HISA Privacy Notice.

8.3 If you object to us processing your data, please be advised that we may only be able to offer general advice, and we may not be able to undertake ongoing casework on your behalf.

8.4 The GDPR sets out your rights as an individual; we strive to uphold and protect your rights in balance with our legitimate interest in supporting you. The ICO website provides detailed explanations of these rights.

Policy adopted: October 2024

Appendix 2:

Representation Agreement & Consent to Share Mandate

Highlands and Islands Students' Association – Advice Service

Client Information

Student Number:

First Name:

Last Name:

I authorise The Advice Service to act on my behalf and to contact other relevant persons and agencies to assist with my enquiry.

- I consent to relevant agencies releasing information regarding myself if the service deems it necessary to research my case and for representation.
- I consent to the Advice Service releasing relevant information to other parties.
- I agree to keep my representative fully informed of any communications or other matters relevant to my case and to supply authentic information regarding my case.
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent by contacting the service in writing.
- I understand that if I persistently and unreasonably fail to cooperate with The Advice Service, they can withdraw representation or research regarding my case at any stage.
- I understand that The Advice Service will keep confidential case notes regarding my case and that these are available to me under the provisions of the Data Protection Act if I so wish.

I confirm that I have discussed these regulations with The Advice Service staff and have fully understood them.

X

Office Use Only:

Checked by: _____

Date: _____

Added to case file: Yes No



Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that the following organisation is a Network Member of AdviceUK:

Highlands and Islands Students' Association

demonstrating compliance with AdviceUK's Network Membership criteria:

- ✔ Advice is independent and impartial with the interests of the client being paramount
- ✔ Advice is confidential
- ✔ Advice is covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance
- ✔ Terms on which services are offered are clearly stated
- ✔ A complaints procedure is in place and a data protection policy
- ✔ Accountability to service users and other stakeholders
- ✔ Commitment to equal opportunities

Membership Expiry Date
31 December, 2024



Liz Bayram
Chief Executive

Appendix 4:

HOUSING LAW ADVICE

TYPE 2
Housing Casework

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT
in professional development awarded to:

Elena Arroyo

June 17, 2024

- Housing issues
- Security of Tenure
- Homelessness
- Repair and Disrepair
- Finance

Congratulations on this achievement, on behalf
of Shelter Scotland an SQA Accreditation centre



SQA Approved
Centre



SHELTER
SCOTLAND

Conferred by Shelter Scotland.



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