



# Student Counseling Policy

## Montana International School Uganda (MISU) Student Counseling Policy

### Policy Statement:

At Montana International School Uganda (MISU), we believe that a student's holistic well-being is fundamental to their academic success and personal development. Our vision to enable every individual to achieve their full potential, develop a strong self-concept, and cultivate resilience extends beyond the classroom to encompass their emotional, social, and psychological health. This Student Counselling Policy outlines MISU's commitment to providing accessible and confidential counselling services to students from Year 7 to Year 13, offering a safe and supportive space for them to explore concerns, develop coping strategies, and navigate the challenges of adolescence within a British-style, Cambridge International School environment in Uganda.

### Guiding Principles:

- **Student-Centric:** The well-being and best interests of the student are at the forefront of all counselling interventions.
- **Confidentiality:** Counselling sessions are confidential, within ethical and legal boundaries, to build trust and encourage open communication.
- **Accessibility:** Counselling services are readily available to all students who may benefit from them.
- **Professionalism:** Services are provided by qualified and experienced professionals adhering to ethical codes of practice.
- **Holistic Support:** Counselling is part of a broader pastoral care system that integrates with academic, health, and safeguarding support.
- **Prevention and Intervention:** The policy supports both proactive well-being initiatives and reactive intervention for students in distress.

### 1. Aims of the Student Counselling Service:

The MISU Student Counselling Service aims to:

- Provide a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental space for students to discuss personal, social, emotional, or academic concerns.
- Help students develop self-awareness, coping mechanisms, and problem-solving skills to manage personal challenges effectively.
- Support students in navigating developmental stages, transitions (e.g., moving to secondary, A-Levels, university applications), and cultural adjustments.
- Promote positive mental health, emotional resilience, and overall well-being.
- Offer support during times of crisis, trauma, or significant life events.
- Act as a referral point to external professional services when specialized or long-term support is required.

## 2. Scope of Services:

The MISU Student Counselling Service provides short-to-medium term support for a range of issues, including but not limited to:

- Stress, anxiety, and low mood.
- Peer relationship difficulties, social anxieties, and loneliness.
- Family changes or challenges.
- Academic pressure or motivation issues.
- Grief and bereavement.
- Bullying (as part of a wider anti-bullying strategy).
- Identity development and self-esteem issues.
- Adjusting to a new environment (cultural, academic, and boarding life).
- Initial support for more complex mental health concerns (with referral to external specialists).

The counselling service does not provide long-term therapy or psychiatric treatment.

## 3. Accessing the Counselling Service:

Students can access counselling through various pathways:

- **Self-Referral:** Students can directly contact the school counsellor to request an appointment.
- **Staff Referral:** A teacher, Head of Year, Head of Boarding, or any other staff member may suggest or make a referral for a student, with the student's agreement (unless there is a safeguarding concern, in which case the DSL is involved immediately).
- **Parent/Guardian Referral:** Parents may contact the school to request counselling support for their child. The counsellor will then meet with the student to assess their willingness to engage.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Referral:** In cases where there are safeguarding concerns, the DSL will involve the counsellor as part of the broader support plan, while adhering to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## 4. Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of effective counselling at MISU.