

1. POLICY STATUS AND DETAILS

Policy Number	NAC12
Approving Authority	Academic Board
Date Implemented	July 2025
Current Version	1.0
Date of Review	July 2028
Contact Officer	Director of Learning and Innovation
Related Policies, Procedures and Documents	Study Access Plan Fit to study Policy Intimacy Guidelines Consent policy

2. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Counsellor	NIDA Counsellors offer a confidential and supportive space where students are heard and supported to make positive change in their personal, academic, and relational lives.
Counselling session	50-minute face to face, telephone or telehealth session between student and Counsellor.
Exceptional Circumstances	Exceptional circumstances are events beyond a student's control that impact wellbeing or study, such as mental health needs requiring ongoing support beyond the standard 10 sessions.
Confidentiality	Client confidentiality means counsellors protect student privacy and only share information with consent. However, under NSW law, they must report risks of harm to self or others, abuse, or safety concerns.
Study Access Plan	A Study Access Plan (SAP) is a confidential document that outlines reasonable adjustments to support students with disabilities, health conditions, neurodivergence, or carer roles, ensuring fair access to training and assessments.
Risk	Risk refers to factors that may threaten a student's safety, wellbeing, or academic progress. In counselling, identifying and responding to risk is a key priority.

Referral	A referral directs a student to external support when their needs go beyond what NIDA counselling can provide, such as more intensive or specialised care.
Trauma Informed Approach	An approach that recognises the impact of trauma and prioritises safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and inclusion to ensure policies and practices do not cause further harm and support all individuals respectfully.

3. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to:

Undergraduate Courses (BFAs)	Postgraduate Courses (MFAs)	Vocational Diplomas
		

4. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the scope and intent of counselling services available to students at NIDA. These services provide access to independent, confidential, and professional support aimed at promoting student wellbeing, supporting academic progress, and fostering respectful, healthy, and effective relationships with peers, educators, and staff. Counselling may include therapeutic and/or practical interventions tailored to individual student needs.

5. PRINCIPLES

At NIDA, we are committed to ensuring that all our policies and practices reflect a trauma-informed approach. We recognise that many students have lived experiences of trauma that can impact how they feel, learn, and work. A trauma-informed approach means creating environments that promote safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and inclusion. This means providing clear and transparent information, supporting people's right to make informed decisions, working *with* students rather than *to* them, recognising and building on people's strengths, and ensuring our spaces and processes are culturally sensitive, respectful, and accessible for everyone. In alignment with these principles, counsellors encourage students to engage with Student Services and, where appropriate, apply for a Study Access Plan (SAP). This process allows for the confidential disclosure of disabilities, neurodivergence, health conditions, or carer responsibilities, so that reasonable adjustments can be considered and implemented to support equitable participation.

5.1 Access to Qualified Counselling Services

Students will have access to independent, confidential counselling provided by a qualified professional with membership in a nationally recognised counselling regulatory body, such as [PACFA](#) and [ACA](#).

5.2 Holistic and Individualised Support

Counselling is student-centred and responsive to everyone's unique context, needs, and goals. It aims to support students in reaching their full potential by addressing a range of issues, including personal challenges, relational wellbeing, mental health, physical health, and barriers to learning.

5.3 Confidentiality and Legal Obligations

Counselling services are delivered within a framework of confidentiality, consistent with legal and ethical obligations,

including mandatory reporting requirements where safety is at risk.

5.4 Accessibility and Inclusivity

Counselling at NIDA is delivered in a way that is inclusive, culturally aware, and trauma-informed, recognising and respecting all forms of diversity. Students will be clearly informed about the support available to them during their studies, and they have the choice to access counselling or not at any time. In situations where a student is placed on a performance management plan, they may be required to meet with the counsellor for additional support as part of NIDA's duty of care. This requirement can be adjusted if the student is already seeing an external psychologist or mental health professional.

5.5 Professional Integrity

Counsellors operate within the ethical standards of their accrediting bodies and maintain appropriate boundaries, professionalism, and accountability in all aspects of service delivery. [Code of Ethics](#)

5.6 Collaboration and Referral

Where appropriate, and with students' consent, counsellors may work in collaboration with staff, other support services or refer students to external professionals to ensure comprehensive and continuous care.

6. POLICY

6.1 Referrals to NIDA Counsellor

Students may access counselling through various referral pathways, including self-referral, staff members, parents or carers and registered medical or health professionals.

6.2 Referrals to other professionals

Counsellors may refer students to external specialist services when appropriate. With the student's consent, the Counsellor may maintain a collaborative relationship with the external provider to ensure continuity of care.

6.3 Interventions

- a) Counselling interventions are flexible, collaborative, and guided by professional best practice. The Counsellor employs empathy, active listening, emotional attunement, and evidence-based therapeutic modalities to support student wellbeing and facilitate personal or academic change.
- b) The Counsellor may liaise with academic staff, where appropriate and with student consent, to support students at academic risk, while maintaining confidentiality.
- c) Where beneficial, joint interventions involving other relevant staff and/or students may be arranged, provided all parties agree and the outcome is likely to be improved through group support.

6.4 Appointments

- a) Students are responsible for booking their counselling appointments, making sure they cause minimal disruption to classes unless in an emergency. Appointments can be made via the QR code on the back of student ID cards.
- b) NIDA students are entitled to up to 10 counselling sessions per calendar year. These do not roll over.
- c) In exceptional circumstances where further sessions are needed, a request may be made through Student Services for additional sessions.
- d) Counselling is available during business hours. After-hours support is provided through UNSW's 24-hour helpline. Counsellors are notified when a student uses this service. UNSW also provides Weekend and after-hours wellbeing checks.

6.5 Confidentiality

- a) Confidentiality is central to effective counselling. Counsellors are guided by the ethical requirements of PACFA and ACA to protect student privacy.
- b) Confidentiality may be limited in situations where there is a risk to self or others, or in cases involving child protection concerns. In these instances, appropriate action and limited disclosure may be required, in line with

mandatory reporting obligations under NSW law.

[Mandatory Reporter Guide – NSW Government](#)

c) With student consent, the Counsellor may share information with key NIDA staff to help support the student's academic progress and wellbeing. Those receiving this information must maintain confidentiality.

d) The scope and limits of confidentiality, including mandatory reporting requirements, are clearly explained to students during initial counselling sessions.

e) Where there is a risk of harm to self-and/or others, and in accordance with NIDA policies, counsellors may disclose relevant information to their line manager to ensure appropriate action and duty of care.

6.6 Students at Psychological Risk

Counsellors will ensure students presenting with or posing risk to self-and/or others are identified early, supported and managed in line with best practice and duty of care. This is achieved by ensuring student incidents are identified and reported in the first instance and in line with NIDA policies. Counsellors collaborate with the Students at Risk Committee, when required, to support best practice in managing and assisting students who are at academic risk. When required, or when there is a substantial concern about a student's capacity to complete their studies, Counsellors may work with staff to arrange for the student's psychologist or psychiatrist to complete a Fit to Study form.

Ethical practice requires that counsellors make confidentiality limitations clear from the outset, so students are fully informed before engaging in counselling. When potential conflicts arise between confidentiality and organisational requirements, the counsellor will aim to work collaboratively with the student to explore options and, where possible, obtain informed consent for any next steps. While counselling sessions are confidential, there are specific circumstances where counsellors may disclose information without the student's consent. These include situations where there is a serious risk of harm to the student or others, or where there is a breach of NIDA policies. In such cases, disclosures may be made to ensure safety and uphold institutional responsibilities.

6.7 Counselling Records

In line with professional standards, the Counsellor maintains confidential records for each student. These include names, session dates, a brief summary of issues or interventions, and relevant communications. All records are securely stored and retained for seven years, in accordance with PACFA and ACA guidelines.

6.8 Reporting

An annual report is submitted to the Academic Board. This includes general data and trends to support institutional awareness and planning, without identifying individuals.

6.9 AI use in Counselling

NIDA counsellors use an AI clinical scribe to help with session documentation. This tool streamlines the process, supporting greater accuracy and efficiency in record-keeping. The use of an AI scribe requires the student's informed and written consent before it is activated. Students will always be clearly informed when an AI scribe is being used and have the choice to decline or withdraw their consent at any time.

7. CHANGE HISTORY

Date	Change Description	Reason for Change	Author	Version
23 July 2025	New policy		Learning and Innovation	1.0

8. BENCHMARKING and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy has been benchmarked against policies and good practice from several higher education providers and other sources.

- National Arts School (NAS)
- AFTRS
- University of South Australia
- UNSW
- University of Canberra
- Blue Knot Foundation
- PACFA (Psychotherapy & Counselling Federation of Australia)

Legislation and Regulatory Frameworks	TEQSA Act 2011 TEQSA Academic Integrity Toolkit TEQSA Guidance Note - Academic Integrity 2019
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