

Psychological Web-Counselling: A European perspective  
Counselling Centre for Students at the University of  
Athens

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# **The Counselling Centre for Students at the University of Athens**

The Counselling Centre for Students of the University of Athens was established in 1990.

The major goal of the Centre is to help and support the students to face effectively all the possible problems that they may encounter during their university life.

The main purposes and activities of the Centre are as follows:

- Counselling Services (individual, group, students with special needs).
- Research on important relevant issues (interruption of studies, substance abuse etc.) in order to improve the quality of the counselling services and develop new intervention methods.
- Training of postgraduate students in Clinical or School Psychology (use of psychometric tests, counselling - psychotherapy, research methodology).

## **Aims**

The web site and the web-counselling service of the Counselling Centre for Students at the University of Athens were established on April, 2000.

The main purposes and activities of the web site are as follows:

- To render psychological counselling services to students via the Internet.
- To facilitate the use of counselling services through the use of new technologies, familiar to students.
- To provide information on student's matters and Psychological Student Counselling to students and mental-health professionals (Vortal).
- To act as a model for the creation of similar web sites in other European Countries.

## **Web - Counselling Service**

- 'E-mail question and answer' form.
  - ◇ Students pose a question to the clinical staff of the Centre through an anonymous e-mail account.
  - ◇ The answer is published on the web site, along with the question within 48 hours.
  - ◇ Answers to similar problems are grouped together.
  - ◇ Very strict technical arrangements ensure the security of the personal data and the anonymity of the students who utilise the service.
- The Service adheres to the Codes of Ethical Conduct released by the:
  - ◇ American Psychological Association
  - ◇ American Counseling Association
  - ◇ National Board of Certified Counselors (USA)and the suggestions of the:
  - ◇ International Society of Mental Health Online
  - ◇ Counseling Center Village
- The aim of the service at its current form (e-mail question and answer) is not to replace traditional in person counselling, but is regarded as a supplemental delivery method for counselling services and as a means of transitioning students to traditional counselling.

In addition, students can access:

- Psychoeducational material on common student problems (stress, self-confidence, academic problems etc.).
- Information about the Centre, about how to arrange a meeting with a counsellor, about the location of the counselling service etc.
- Useful links.

## **Feature Plans**

- Enhancement of the web-site with the extensive use of videos.
- Other forms of web counselling:
  - On line chat
  - Video conference
- On line intake procedure (screening etc.)

## **Evaluation**

- This project has been put into practice – successfully and effectively – in the USA, yet it still forms an innovation for Europe. Consequently, the project's adjustment, application and evaluation according to European conditions issues a challenge.
- At the moment all aspects of the Service are closely monitored and results will be published after a 12 months trial period.

## **Beneficiaries**

- Students with special needs (e.g. people with motor disabilities).
- Students ambivalent about counselling.
- Students that do not attend (very common phenomenon in Greece).
- Students studying abroad (accessible counselling services in native language).
- Students with time constraints (working, mature, etc.).
- Parents, friends or persons willing to help a student to face his/her problems.
- Members of the academic staff confronting a problem with a student.
- Counsellors, in the framework of experience exchange.
- Social welfare conveyors.
- Researchers interested in the field.
- Organisations (e.g. FEDORA).
- Individuals.

## European Perspective

One of the aims of the web site is to act as a model for the creation of a network of similar web pages in other European Countries.

Goals of the Network:

- To facilitate the exchange of information, experience, and good practices among European Counselling Centres for Students.
- To act as a pilot model for the co-operation of Counselling Centres for Students across Europe.

Partners

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>
Counselling Centre for Students University of Athens	Greece
Psychologische Studentenberatung Linz University of Linz	Austria
Bergische U niversität – Gesamthochschule Wuppertal University of Wuppertal	Germany
University of Limerick	Ireland
Dipartimento di Neuroscienze e Scienze del Comportamento (Unità di Psicologia Clinica e Psicoanalisi Applicata) University of Napoli	Italy
Fundació Autònoma Solidària University of Barcelona	Spain