

ISU COUNSELING HANDBOOK 2017/18



Mission statement: We learn together to unlock the opportunities of a changing world

Authorised: International Baccalaureate Organisation, **Accredited:** Council of International Schools and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
ISU Counseling Mission Statement	3
Key Contact per Grade	4
Professional School Counseling Programme	4
Role of the School Counselor	4
Student Support Department and Student Support Team	5
Child Protection	5
Confidentiality	6
Staff Counseling	6
Parents Counseling	6
Counseling Services in Junior School	7
Counseling Services in Senior School	8
University and College Counseling	14
External Resources for Mental Health Support	15
References	16

INTRODUCTION

This Counseling Handbook aims at presenting the Counseling Programme and Services to the Community and at recording professional practices for the purpose of continuity.

At ISU there are 3 Counselors, one in Junior School and two in Senior School, who focus on the different needs of our diverse student population. Counselors collaborate with teachers and Administrators to promote and enhance the development of the whole student. In our work, we follow the guidelines of the International School Counseling Association (derived from the American School Counseling Association). By doing this, we aim at reaching all students and their developmental needs, focusing on a preventative approach.

School Counselors aim at contributing to the academic mission of the school by promoting and enhancing the learning process for all students, in terms of academic, personal, social and emotional growth.

In terms of academic growth, the Counselors collaborate with teachers to allow students to express themselves in the different subject areas and to receive qualified support in identified areas of need. The focus is on motivation, metacognition and self management skills. In Senior School, the University and College Counselor works closely with the higher Grade levels, to prepare them for post-secondary choices.

In terms of personal/social/emotional development, the Counselors' job is that of facilitating students' knowledge of themselves and learning of skills necessary to cope with the challenges of growing up. Through preventative and responsive services, the Counselors teach students about social skills, self care strategies, values and development of character traits that lead to becoming a responsible and well-rounded person. Students are offered occasions to learn about empathy, emotions' awareness and management, and other skills through the Life Skills Programme. This Programme (described in more detail in the Senior School section of this document) is a series of classroom lessons that provide a chance for students to self reflect and better understand themselves and others.

Through its activities and in connection with the School's Mission 'We learn together to unlock the opportunities of a changing world', the counseling department promotes well-being and self-awareness, as well as a sense of responsibility to self and others.

The goal is to educate students to the importance of being active lifelong learners and knowledgeable, balanced and caring citizens of the world.

ISU SCHOOL COUNSELING MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of ISU’s Counseling Programme is aligned with the school’s mission and vision of preparing students for a world that is changing, by helping them develop skills in the areas of critical thinking, self management, empathy and self awareness.

‘We learn together to unlock the opportunities of a changing world.’

Vision: ‘We come together as a committed, inclusive community of students, parents, teachers, staff and leaders, in order to prepare for a world that changes with unprecedented speed. Our approaches to learning ground us in the knowledge base of the traditional disciplines. Upon this foundation we build the critical thinking skills and creativity necessary for realizing opportunities, adapting to change and developing a personal moral compass.’

As an IB school, we value the Learner’s Profile attributes. These traits (Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced, Reflective) are often mentioned in the classroom, through activities and conversations and are used as a guide to set personal goals or praise behavior.

KEY CONTACT PER GRADE

Currently there are 3 Counselors on staff:

Ms Hannah Gray	EC to Grade 5	hgray@isumail.ac.ug
Ms Francesca Ferrari	Grade 6 to Grade 12	fferrari@isumail.ac.ug
Mr Matthew Buxton	Grade 11 and 12 University Counseling	mbuxton@isumail.ac.ug

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMME

The International School Counseling Association (ISCA) defines a Professional School Counseling Programme as:

- Designed to ensure that every student benefits from it
- An integral part of the educational programme and is implemented by qualified school counselors
- Comprehensive in scope, preventative in design, developmental in nature, and focuses on personal/social, academic and career development
- Conducted in collaboration with teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and other support service professionals in order to meet student needs.
- Engaged in ongoing evaluation to assess effectiveness and meet the needs of the students
- Sensitive to the unique needs of an international, transient population.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

At ISU we have two Counselors who work with students on educational and socio-emotional matters and are responsible for Child Protection concerns. The third Counselor is the College Counselor, who acts as an academic advisor and helps students with their post secondary study and career plans.

In general, School Counselors are licensed educators trained in school counseling with special qualifications and skills to address students' academic, personal/social and career development needs. ISU endorses the Professional School Counselor Role Statement of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2004b), and implements the standards of the International School Counseling Association (ISCA), developed in 2012.

The School Counselor:

- Serves a crucial role in maximizing student achievement as well as personal/social and career development;
- Incorporates leadership, advocacy and collaboration in the educational setting;
- Promotes equity and access to opportunities and educational experiences for all students to maximize their post-diploma options;
- Supports a safe learning environment and works to safeguard the human rights of all members of the school community;
- Collaborates with other stakeholders to promote student achievement and development;
- Addresses the needs of all students through prevention and intervention programs that are part of a comprehensive school counseling programme;

- Works to ensure all students' dignity and culture (including: race, ethnicity, gender, abilities, sexual orientation, home language, religion, socioeconomic status) are respected and valued;
- Proactively serves as an advocate for all Students;
- Helps to create a welcoming, inclusive school climate;
- Develops core competencies to address the unique cultural needs of the students (i.e., promoting inclusive language and cultural recognition, becoming knowledgeable with respect to cultural bias in testing, etc.);
- Abides by ASCA's professional school counseling ethics (ASCA, 2004a) (<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Ethics/EthicalStandards2016.pdf>)
- Engages in professional development including activities to enhance cultural competency. (VSCA, 2008)

STUDENT SUPPORT DEPARTMENT AND STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM (SST)

The Junior and Senior School Counselors are part of the Student Support Services Departments. Each school level has a Student Support Team (SST) that includes the Principals, Learning Specialists and, for Senior School, the Dean of Students. The members of SST meet weekly to go over concerns regarding students well being and performance at school and plan what actions need to be taken to support them. A Google doc is shared among participants, which allows to create an agenda and follow the discussion with action plans.

CHILD PROTECTION

The Counselors, with Principals and the Head of School, are in charge of Child Protection at ISU. Their work on policies and procedures, in collaboration with the school's faculty, ensure they are put into practice. The Child Protection Team is appointed each school year and includes the Counselors, Principals, Head of School, Nurse and two designated teachers. In addition, the Counselors offer annual training to all staff in regards to child protection.

Link to the short version on the School's Website:

[https://www.isu.ac.ug/uploaded/Admissions/Docs/New -
ISU Child Protection Policy.pdf](https://www.isu.ac.ug/uploaded/Admissions/Docs/New-_ISU_Child_Protection_Policy.pdf)

CONFIDENTIALITY

The content discussed with the Counselors is confidential, unless the person who shared it, or somebody else, is in danger. The Counselors will let the person know when they have to disclose any information with a third party, for safeguarding purposes.

STAFF COUNSELING

The Counselors are available for all staff in the School, to support them with individual concerns and offering strategies and techniques to improve their personal and professional well-being.

PARENTS COUNSELING

The Counselor is available to offer counseling sessions to parents and caretakers, directed at supporting them in their delicate role of educators.

COUNSELING SERVICES IN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Counseling Techniques & Weekly Meetings with Students

The Junior School Counselor is responsible for the emotional well-being of the Junior School students. The Junior School Counselor meets weekly with students who have been identified by their parents, teachers, or themselves. During individual weekly sessions the School Counselor uses a variety of techniques, including talk therapy, movement therapy, puppet role playing, games and other activities that promote individual growth, teamwork and/or self-awareness. Each of these techniques enables the students to express themselves through words or actions, and work through any pressing issues they may have in school or out of school. Additionally, the School Counselor assists students during significant life transitions and challenging situations.

Class Visits & Student Workshops

The School Counselor offers class visits, which includes workshops on a variety of behavioral and mental health topics, and social learning through stories and other activities. During class workshops, students learn about tolerance and acceptance, social learning skills, healthy coping mechanisms, as well as peer-mediation and conflict resolution.

Parent Forum

The Junior School Counselor offers weekly Parent Forums which bring parents together to discuss a variety of topics which affect their children. This is a forum for parents to share personal experiences, advice and support each other through the stages of raising children.

COUNSELING SERVICES IN SENIOR SCHOOL

Regular meetings with the students

The Counselor meets individually with all Middle School students every six to eight weeks. If time allows, these meetings are extended to high school students. This is a way for the students to become more familiar with the Counselor as a person and be able to look for her in case of need. For the Counselor, these meetings are a chance to identify particular needs and follow up on them.

Classroom observation

The Counselor can spend time in the classroom to observe how students interact and cope with the academic demands, and to collect ideas in regards to supporting specific students she works with.

Responsive Services

Responsive services are activities designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns and may include counseling in individual or small-group settings or crisis response. We encourage students to see the Counselor as a person who will offer a safe space for them to speak without fear of being judged, with the benefit of confidentiality (unless the person or someone else is in danger). The Counselor can also function as a bridge and advocate between the students and teachers/administrators.

The Counselor works with students on a range of issues, including:

- communication and relationship building skills with peers, parents, and teachers
- time management and study skills
- stress management
- anxiety reduction
- transitions, self-esteem
- management of peer pressure

Small group counseling

When possible, small group counseling is offered to students who share the same needs or when it is useful to work on similar skills. These meetings take place either during lunch time, or taking time from different subjects in rotation.

Personal Social Well-being Curriculum - Life Skills Programme

The Life Skills Programme is designed to support the development of students' understanding of their own wellbeing and ways to enhance it. There are about 2 lessons per month in Grades 6 to 8 and 1 lessons per month in Grades 9 and 10, taught by the

Senior School’s Counselor, in collaboration with Homeroom Teachers (when possible/necessary).

The curriculum covers two main areas: intrapersonal and interpersonal growth. Topics that fall under the intrapersonal growth area are mindfulness and yoga, choices about substance use and authenticity; the interpersonal growth encompasses listening/empathy, digital life/cyber safety and ‘the professional me’ that is about what is needed to succeed as a student. The table below is a living document that changes depending on students’ needs and curriculum choices.

	Intrapersonal Skills			Interpersonal Skills		
Grade 6	Substance Use: peer pressure, general discussion about addictions and substances. Reflection about benefit/danger for health	Mindfulness and Yoga: practical experience of how these tools allow our mind and body to be more connected and what is the benefit of this.	Authenticity: being yourself and when it is worth adapting your behavior	Being a group member: inclusion and social skills. Role plays about how they treat each other, the consequences and what could be done better	Cybersafety and Digital Citizenship appropriate and inappropriate interactions (online social behavior) and their consequences.	The Professional Me How to survive Grade 6 academically socially and personally
Grade 7	Substance Use: building up on Grade 6’s lesson, students are introduced to different substances that can lead to addiction and work on assertive skills and personal values	Mindfulness and yoga as a strategy to calm oneself, connect body and mind and train our focusing skills. Different practices and focusing games/activities.	Authenticity: self-awareness activity ‘my roots’. The students will make a piece of art to represent themselves, what they like, where they come from, cultural background, with the outcome of	Being a group member: learning how to be counselors to each other and build meaningful and supportive relationships	Cybersafety and Digital Citizenship: Online safety and how to respect yourself and others in class.	The Professional Me Idols and role models/ who inspires me and why.

			celebrating diversity, appreciation of self.			
Grade 8	Substance Use: introducing alcohol and more about handling peer pressure in social situations	Mindfulness and emotion regulation: learning strategies for being in the moment and improving personal well-being	Authenticity: Penn State University Questionnaire about Strengths. Authentic happiness videos/discussion questions in small groups and final written individual reflection.	Being a group member: how can you be a jerk? have you ever been one? activities and reflections on how we hurt each other and how we can protect ourselves or prevent this from happening	Cybersafety and Digital Citizenship Online safety activities	The Professional Me Activities to explain growth mindset and fixed mindset
Grade 9	Substance Use: Open discussion with guiding questions in a box. Students can pick discussion starters. Use of whiteboard to collect ideas.	Mindfulness as a tool for training attention/focus and self-awareness. Different practices (sitting meditation, body scan, sounds awareness etc)	Authenticity: Brené Brown video about the courage to be vulnerable and what could be the message to them. Independent/ Group work: a letter to a future 15 years old	Being a group member: how to I express myself in the different communities that I belong to. What changes and what stays the same, what are my strengths and my limits in social interactions.	Cybersafety and Digital Citizenship: the age of distraction/ and video games	The Professional Me www.teachingresourcesupport.com

Grade 10	Substance Use: key words on the board to initiate a discussion about beliefs and misconceptions in regards to substance use among teenagers	Mindfulness and stress management: recognizing where and how stress manifest itself. defining stress as an anticipation of what is coming; yoga nidra practice and reflection	Authenticity: activity built around TED talk 'The art of being yourself'	Being a group member An opportunity to reflect on the groups they are part of and how they make them feel. 'Do you feel listened to?'	Cybersafety and Digital Citizenship Online dating, self expression online, digital life, pornography	The Professional Me My future, what do I want for myself and how can I get there
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Human Sexuality: emotional and developmental aspects

The Counselor collaborates with the Science and PHE teachers to address the emotional aspects of sexual development and topics related to relationships and sexual health.

Depending on time, the areas covered are: physical and socio-emotional aspects of puberty, sexual development, values and choices, contraception and sexually transmitted infections, reflections on balanced and fulfilling personal relationships, the importance of consent.

In terms of guiding manual, the first source of materials is a manual produced by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society. These materials come with videos available on Youtube and are very well received by adolescents.

Parents Workshops

Parents sessions are offered during the school year, to allow parents to meet and discuss about topics like healthy digital life, brain development during adolescence, a mindful approach to parenting and others. The Counselors generally survey the

Community in order to collect preferences in terms of topics and preferred time of the day for the workshops.

Adolescent brain development: this workshop allowed parents to discuss about the changes happening during the teenage years, the shared challenges and what can be considered 'normal' at this age. The Counselor showed a TED talk addressing the topic and guided parents in sharing personal experiences about how to best support their children and themselves during this sometimes trying time.

Digital Life: the workshop is held together with the IT teacher and is a chance for parents to discuss about their children's use of technology and Internet. The focus is on security issues, use of social media and the implications technology has on teenagers' social relationships. The Counselor addresses the distracting power of technology and the challenge of managing time between a recreational use and an academic/professional one. This topic is usually very relevant for parents, as it is definitely difficult for them to monitor their children's use of the internet and also because even adults themselves struggle in balancing their use of media. During the workshop a list of websites is shared, with advice on how to manage time and distraction, and a handout with a list of questions for parents to start conversations with their children on different topics related to digital life.

Mindful Parenting: the workshop is an opportunity to share the theory and practice of mindfulness applied to parenting. It is a short introduction to the benefits of practicing awareness and the five key aspects of being a mindful parent (listening with full attention, non-judgemental acceptance of self and child, emotional awareness of self and child, self regulation in the parenting relationship, compassion for self and child).

Peer Mentoring programme (Peer Coaching)

This year (2016/17) a peer mentoring programme has been piloted in Senior School, with high school students being trained in becoming mentors for Grade 6 and 7 students. The mentoring aims at facilitating the transition from Junior School and to build a stronger connection among students in different grades. It also offers an opportunity to high school students to develop relationship skills and to express the Learner Profile's characteristics.

Transitioning students

The Counselor works closely with all new students, and supports those who know they'll be moving to another school.

Incoming students who come from non-international schools are offered a transition programme, where different teachers train them on necessary skills to succeed in a school that teaches through inquiry. The Counselor is part of the transition programme and poses herself as a referral point for new students. The Counselor checks on them throughout the school year to monitor their progress and well being.

The Counselor works with students who join during the year, making sure they are able to settle in and receive the necessary help from the School Community.

Transition from Grade 5 to Grade 6

The Counselor collaborates with Grade 5 and Grade 6 teachers in facilitating the transition to from Junior School to Senior School. In order to do this, a 'Jump-up day' is organized, where Grade 5 students have a chance to visit Senior School, attend some lessons, take part in a Treasure Hunt (meant to familiarize them with people and places

in Senior School) and have a question and answer session with both the JS Counselor and the SS Counselors, with a focus on how to prepare for the change and how to cope with the possible anxiety that comes with it.

The Junior and Senior School Counselors meet to share important information in regards to Grade 5 students' needs, in order to provide continuity in the services offered.

Transition from Grade 10 to 11

Both the Diploma Coordinator and the Guidance Counselor meet with Grade 10 students to guide the students in choosing their Diploma subjects and begin looking into post-secondary education options.

In terms of counseling, the students are invited to take a personality test and a career survey that is then discussed with the Counselor, to identify strengths and areas of growth and start making plans for the future.

Student Council

The Counselor collaborates with the teachers who organize the Middle and High School Councils. The two councils are chosen every year by the student body and function as a way for students to promote a positive and lively school spirit.

The Counselor attends the meetings and supports the Councils in the promotion and organization of their events (usual events are like Movie Nights, a Talent Show and Spirit Week)

As a school, we aim at improving the ability of students to carry on independent activities, with little teacher's supervision: in order to do this, at the beginning of the year a leadership and collaboration skills' training is organized and offered to the students interested in being part of the Council.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE COUNSELING

At the International School of Uganda we offer a supportive and consistent University and College Counseling programme.

From the beginning of Grade 11 the University and College Counselor meets all students to establish their future study and career plans. Mentoring is then ongoing on a monthly basis to guide students through the process of establishing short lists of desired destinations. All Grade 11 students also attend regular college presentations and the annual Kampala College and Careers Fair.

In Grade 12 students are then mentored through formal meetings and 'office hours' to assist them with the application process. IBC (IB Core) periods are also used on occasion for whole group counseling.

College/University Counseling and guidance at ISU includes-

- Organisation of PSAT testing in Grade 10 (and Grade 11 as necessary)
- Meeting all students monthly for careers and university/college guidance
- Regular information sessions for students and parents
- One-to-one meetings with parents to discuss applications
- Organisation and guidance on SAT testing (held at the school)
- Registering students on Common App and UCAS
- Attendance of Kampala College Fair (September of Grade 11)
- Transcript preparation and sending
- Guidance on college choices through Naviance, UCAS Search and other websites
- Ongoing mentoring of IB Diploma achievement to guide applications
- Assistance with Personal Statement and Essay writing
- Resume and CV writing advice
- Full time access to the College/University Counsellors office through Office Hours

EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

When a student needs' require formal psychotherapy, the Counselors refer the student and the family to external resources. In Kampala, the number of options are limited and change often. At the moment (Feb 2017) these are our external resources (For psychoeducational assessments students are usually referred to Kenya or, if foreigners, to their home countries).

Femke Bannink: 0772928011, femke.bannink@ugent.be

Anna Van Brakel: annamlvanbrakel@gmail.com

Susanne Durr: 0772 934217, su.duerr@gmx.net

Judith Finkbeiner: 0777 757290, Judith.finkbeiner@aim.org (Works with Missionary individuals/families only)

Aaron Howley 0787 522 868, aaron.howley@aimint.org (works with Missionary but can also see other clients, mostly young adults and adults)

Shona Wahome: 0773518740, sswahome@googlemail.com (Ugandan born, raised & educated in UK)

Lois Ochieng: Ugandan EMDR counsellor / coordinator, ochienglois@yahoo.co.uk

Grace Namale: Ugandan Counseling Psychologist, gnamale@sootheconsult.com,
0779136854/ 0752478322

REFERENCES

Asca Ethical Standards

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Ethics/EthicalStandards2016.pdf>

Isca school counseling manual

<http://iscainfo.com/the-model/>