

AUCC Categorisation of Client Concerns

3rd Edition Summer 2009

The AUCC Categorisation System was introduced in August 1997 after three years of piloting. It was revised with effect from 2000 and has remained unchanged since then, except where services have added their own extra categories to suit local conditions. The AUCC Research Sub-Committee has now produced this further revision. Changes from 2nd Edition are in red.

The system is used to collect data for the AUCC Annual Survey of Counselling in Further and Higher Education, and (the earlier version) is also incorporated into the Inform Database software. Many services use it to record data used for management reports and for managing aspects of the Service. It forms the basis for the annual collection and collation of statistics from F&HE counselling services in the UK and Ireland.

The Components

- **Group Headings** A set of fifteen general headings, each of which is partnered to a set of Main Detailed Categories, which help define the scope of the group heading.
- **Main Detailed Categories under the Group Headings**
- **Severity Scale** A scale from **0-7** which attempts to assess the impact of a client’s concerns on the individual client. It can also be used to assess risk. Note this is indicative, and has been deemed to too subjective for inter-service correlation. CORE data, where available is deemed to be a more reliable indicator. Please feel free to use this AUCC severity scale, but it is not envisaged that we will ask for this data in annual surveys across the sector.

It is intended that this **Third edition** of the AUCC Categorisation System **once adopted** should be used without revision for a further 3-5 years.

Using the System

All people using the Categorisation System must be aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act. In particular, users should remember that personal data, whether stored in a computerised or manual system, is covered by the Act. Procedures should be in place to ensure the accuracy, confidentiality and security of the record, and to allow individuals access to their own data record.

Presenting Concerns It is suggested that counsellors restrict this to **one category**, and make it the most significant thing that the client mentioned right at the beginning. Counsellors might find it helpful to think of it in terms of what it was that triggered the client into coming to counselling.

Emerging Concerns Try to restrict this to not more than **three categories**. An emerging concern is a significant issue, raised and understood by the client and by the counsellor. Where there are more than three issues or concerns, restrict it to the three most significant overall. Emerging issues can appear in the initial or subsequent sessions.

Group Headings and Main Detailed Categories It is suggested that counsellors always select a group heading. If they want more detail, they can also select a detailed category. Decisions on how detailed to be will generally be dictated by the purpose for which you are recording the data. *Please note that the numbers for Detailed Categories have changed.*

Severity As this is a counsellor-subjective scale it is probably more useful to the individual counsellor than as a research tool or as an across-service or national comparator. As a number of services are now using CORE, with a well-respected research base, we anticipate that the degree of client disturbance (rather than presenting issues) will increasingly be analysed through CORE rather than this system. Severity may usefully be used within a service, provided that some form of harmonising counsellors' scores is also applied.

When assessing severity, counsellors should be reflecting the impact of the issues on the individual client, bearing in mind other factors such as personality, coping ability, time in the academic year, previous experiences, available support, etc. Thus, the assessment is based on a cluster of factors: it is not about how severe objectively a problem is.

The descriptions given for each scale point have been modified to try to make each distinct. Counsellors and Services should decide when and how often to assess severity. Some counsellors record it at assessment, some record the peak, some record the beginning, end and peak. Whatever, you decide, it is important to be consistent in when it is recorded.

Further Detailed Categories Please use the blank numbers in each group heading, and from 400 on to record any categories that you need for your service/clientele which are not represented in this list.

Severity Rating Scale

- 0 Experiencing normal issues of living, mood stable, functioning **well**.
- 1 The issue presented concerns the client **intermittently**, it is within control but may require attention sooner or later.
- 2 The issue requires attention because it is having a negative but **limited** impact on the client’s life.
- 3 The issue is causing anxiety and distress: there is an awareness of it affecting **one area** of functioning significantly.
- 4 The issue is causing considerable anxiety and distress which in turn is affecting **several areas** of functioning.
- 5 The issue is causing severe anxiety and distress affecting **all areas** of functioning and the client’s ability to cope is severely limited.
- 6 The issue is affecting all aspects of the client’s life: extreme distress; highly anxious; may be self-harm, acting out; loss of hope, sense of unreality, unable to be comforted or reassured. Functioning with **extreme** difficulty.
- 7 Not coping; out of control; despair and hopelessness; emotionally **overwhelmed**; suicidal thoughts/intent.

GROUP HEADINGS

- A Abuse
- B Academic
- C Anxiety
- D Addictive Behaviour
- E Depression, Anger & Mood Change or Disorder
- H Loss
- J Other Mental Health Conditions
- K Physical Health
- L Eating Disorders
- M Relationships
- R Self & Identity
- S Sexual issues
- T Transitions
- U Welfare & Employment
- X Self Harm

THE CATEGORIES

A ABUSE

- 100 Abuse – where client is/was abuser
- 101 Physical abuse – where client is/was being abused
- 102 Psychological abuse –client is/was being abused
- 103 Sexual abuse – where client is/was being abused
- 104 Persecution/bullying/harassment/stalking – client is being or has been persecuted/bullied by other(s) (see also some more specific categories further on in this section)
- 105 Rape – where client has been raped
- 106 Attempted rape or sexual indecency – where **client has experienced** sexual assault
- 107 Client is target of assault or crime
- 108 **Crime by client** including **client has been accused (falsely or otherwise) of committing crime**
- 109 **Harassment, Persecution/Discrimination by client** – where client is harassing/bullying/persecuting other(s)
- 110 **Danger to others** - client is concerned about being a **danger to others**
- 111 **Persecution/Discrimination - Racial/Religious** - client is/has been persecuted/discriminated against racially or on religious grounds
- 112 **Persecution/Discrimination - Sexual** – client is currently or has been persecuted/discriminated against sexually
- 113 **Domestic violence towards** client
- 114 **Domestic violence by client towards another**
- 115 **Trauma experienced recently** (note for Historical experience of trauma use code 308)
- 116 **Forced Marriage concerns**
- 117 **Drink Spiking** – client has experienced having their drink spiked
- 118 **Cult membership/involvement**
- 119 **Blank for own categories**

B ACADEMIC

- 120 Dyslexia
- 121 Learning difficulties/special needs
- 122 Poor study skills/time management
- 123 Struggling academically
- 124 **Exam related stress/anxiety**
- 125 Performance anxiety – not exams
- 126 Appeals/complaints/grievances (academic)
- 127 Relating to academic procedures
- 128 Request for written support/reference/report
- 129 Lack of academic motivation/concentration and procrastination
- 130 **Disappointment with course/course content**
- 131 **Suspension/withdrawal/time out from course/Intercalation**
- 132 Placement/work experience
- 133 Poor command of English
- 134 **Unrealistic academic standards**
- 134a **Exam failure**
- 135 **Assessment for entry or continuation** – client concern about
- 135a **Inadequate conditions/facilities for study**
- 135b **Inadequate feedback on academic progress**

- 136 Over-work or under-work
- 136a Problems participating in academic sessions
- 136b Loss of academic course/course closure
- 137 Consultation with academic colleagues
- 137 a Pre-university/college discussion
- 138 Disciplinary procedure – eg Plagiarism
- 139 Fitness to Practice issues/procedures – course related

C ANXIETY

- 140 Anxiety – mild and/or generalised
- 141 Severe anxiety state
- 142 Panic attacks
- 143 Phobia
- 144 Stress
- 145 Shock state
- 146 Post traumatic stress (inc PTSD)
- 147 **Social Anxiety/Social Phobia**
- 148 - 149 Blank for own categories

D ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS

- 160 Alcohol abuse/dependency
- 161 Drug abuse/dependency (illegal)
- 162 Drug abuse/dependency (prescribed medication)
- 163 Nicotine abuse/dependency
- 164 Solvent abuse/dependency
- 165 Gambling
- 166 Addictive behaviours/thoughts, not specifically listed
- 167 **Addictive behaviour of partner**
- 168 – 179 Blank for own categories

E DEPRESSION, ANGER & MOOD CHANGE OR DISORDER

- 180 Low mood
- 181 Depression
- 182 Mood swings
- 183 **Anger – client has difficulty managing own anger**
- 184 **Anger – client experiences anger towards them**
- 185-199 Blank for own categories

H LOSS

- 200 Abandoned
- 201 Adoption
- 202 Bereavement – a loss of a relationship through death
- 203 Separation/divorce – of a client’s parents
- 204 Separation/divorce of client
- 205 Loss of family stability
- 206 Letting go after a relationships ends
- 207 Loss of hopes/plans/expectations – non-academic/work
- 208 **Relationship loss through illness (client’s or other’s illness)**

- 209 Theft or loss of property of client
- 210 Loss of childhood
- 211 Emotional abandonment by parent
- 212 Loss of adolescence
- 213 Bereavement through Suicide of partner/relative/close friend
- 214 -219 Blank for own categories

J OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

- 220 Psychosomatic disorders
- 221 Thought disorder – *eg symptoms of psychosis*
- 222 Bi-polar symptoms or manic episode
- 223 Personality disorder
- 224 Obsessive compulsive disorder
- 225 *Concerns over own mental health*
- 226 *Impact of mental health problems of others (e.g. in household or family)*
- 227 – 229 Blank for own categories

K PHYSICAL HEALTH

- 240 Illness – general or non-specific
- 241 Injury
- 242 Surgery
- 243 Disability
- 244 Pre-menstrual tension
- 245 Post viral fatigue/ME/*Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)*
- 246 Sleep disturbance
- 247 *Menopause/HRT*
- 248 *Fear/concern over client’s own physical health (e.g. cancer)*
- 249 *Concern over illness of significant other (partner, parent etc.)*
- 250 Blank for own categories

L EATING DISORDERS

- 260 Anorexia
- 261 Bulimia
- 262 Compulsive eating
- 263 *Loss of appetite/not eating*
- 264 Other eating disorders or non-specific eating disorder
- 264-270 Blank for own categories

M RELATIONSHIPS

- 271 – 279 *Blank for own categories*
- 280 Relationship with friend(s) *and/or house mates*
- 281 Relationship with partner
- 282 Relationships in the family or with a family member
- 283 Relationship with other/s *(including staff)*
- 284 Difficulties with authority
- 285 Difficulty with intimacy
- 286 Lack of relationships/lonely/isolated
- 287 Arranged marriage concerns

- 288 Socially inappropriate behaviour
- 289 Understanding other and being understood
- 290 Concern about the safety and welfare of others
- 291 Difficulties with house/flat mates
- 292 Difficulties in relationship with the opposite gender
- 293 Difficulties in relationship with the same gender
- 294 Difficulty starting a relationship
- 295 Difficulty ending a relationship
- 296 Family problems rather than difficulties in the relationships
- 297 Childcare and parenting difficulties
- 298 Step-parent difficulties
- 299 Blank for own categories

R SELF & IDENTITY

- 300 Self-esteem/**Self-confidence/ego strength/coping ability**
- 301 Personal growth/search for values and meaning
- 302 Spiritual concerns
- 303 Sexual identity/orientation
- 304 Cultural identity
- 305 Acting-out behaviour
- 306 Fragmentation/lack of containment
- 307 Mistrusting/difficulty to trust others
- 308 Early trauma and its effects
- 309 Decision making – finding it difficult to make decisions & stick to them
- 310 **Mid life crisis**
- 311 **Denial**
- 312 **Talking to gain clarity about a situation**
- 313 **Perfectionism**
- 314 **Lack of direction (career or otherwise)**
- 315 **Autism Spectrum Condition (inc Asperger’s Syndrome)**
- 316 -319 Blank for own categories

S SEXUAL ISSUES

- 320 Pregnancy – **client or partner has become pregnant**
- 321 Miscarriage
- 322 Abortion – client or client’s partner is considering or has had an abortion
- 323 Contraception
- 324 Anxieties about sex
- 325 Loss of sexual interest and drive
- 326 Sexual dysfunction
- 327 Sexually transmitted infection (including HIV)
- 328 **Fertility/Infertility**
- 329 **Blank for own category**

T TRANSITIONS

- 340 Leaving home/homesickness
- 341 University/Institution/college – adjustment to
- 342 University/ Institution/college – transferring/changing
- 343 University/ Institution/college – leaving

- 344 Cultural change
- 345 Institutional change within the University
- 346 Client has become a parent
- 347 Major life change contemplated
- 348 Referral to other/outside/community agency post-university
- 349 Refugee/Asylum-Seeker related
- 350 -359 Blank for own categories

U SERVICES, WELFARE & EMPLOYMENT

- 360 Relationship difficulty with colleague(s) – ie co-workers
- 361 Retirement/redundancy
- 362 Accommodation
- 363 Employment and vocational;
- 364 Family issues – including advice about childcare, parenting, dependent relatives
- 365 Financial
- 366 Immigration and work-permit
- 367 Legal
- 368 Burn-out
- 369 Grievances/disciplinary action
- 370 Grievance/dissatisfaction with University/Institution/college Services/Facilities
- 371 Grievance/dissatisfaction with NHS/other services
- 372 Accommodation issues e.g. request for evidence to change accommodation
- 373 Difficulties in the workplace
- 374 Conditions of work / unhappy at work
- 375 Bullying/harassment at work
- 376 Sexual harassment at work
- 377 Work-related stress
- 378 – 379 Blank for own categories

X SELF HARM

- 380 Intentional Self-harm – e.g. cutting, burning, over-exercise, self medication
- 381 Suicidal thoughts or feelings
- 382 Past suicide attempt – more than 6 months previous
- 383 Recent suicide attempt – within last 6 months
- 384 Unintentional self-harm (e.g. through self-neglect)
- 385 High risk behaviour (e.g. extreme sports, driving carelessly, unsafe sex etc.)
- 386 – 400 and beyond Blank for own categories