

Frequently Asked Questions on the Telepsychology Service offered by CLMS Student Support Services

What is telepsychology?

Telepsychology is the use of telecommunication technologies to provide psychological services. Modern technology has enabled psychologists/counsellors to consult with clients by using secure, encrypted services to communicate. Due to the current pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID 19), telepsychology is being used to provide psychological services remotely using your smartphone, laptop, or tablet. Services can be provided via email, video conferencing, websites, chatrooms or forums. The communication can be synchronous, where you can communicate in real-time (e.g., video-conferencing), or asynchronous where there are delays in interactions (e.g., email), or even non-interactive (e.g., psychoeducational websites).

Due to these uncertain times where we are facing the pandemic with lockdown and social distancing measures in place, more and more people than ever before are utilizing online counselling for mental health support.

CLMS Student Support Services are able to offer weekly online counselling sessions and group sessions using Zoom, a secure video conferencing tool. These sessions offer the same support and confidentiality as face to face counselling.

Q: What services are being offered to students currently?

A: Student Support Services is currently offering students online one-on-one counselling and group sessions via zoom. Limited support is given via emails. Our Career Development officer is also available via email to offer guidance on job search skills including cover letters, cv writing and interview skills.

Please access our CLMS webpage: <https://clmsstudentsupport.ukzn.ac.za> for more exciting resources and psycho-education to assist you with taking care of your mental health and achieving academic success.

Q: What is counselling?

A: A confidential discussion in a one-to-one situation. It is an opportunity to talk things over with a trained professional. This can help you make sense of your feelings and circumstances. Although a counsellor will not tell you what to do, counselling may offer encouragement and new ideas for coping with a situation or relationship. We understand that for many students already experiencing anxiety and depression that these feelings may have worsened or intensified since isolation restrictions have been imposed and so counselling can help with these.

Q: How do I book a session?

A: Contact our administrative officer, Ms Nomathemba Makhathini <MakhathiniN@ukzn.ac.za> via email and ask to be booked for a session. Nomathemba will set the appointment for you with the next available counsellor and send you an email with the date and time of your appointment. You will also be requested to acknowledge the appointment. The counsellor will send you an ***informed consent form and an intake form***. These need to be ***completed in full and returned via email before your session***. Please indicate whether you prefer a zoom session or email correspondence. The counsellor will send an invite email with a link to login to Zoom for your scheduled session before the session time.

Q: How do I join a zoom meeting through an email invite?

A: Before joining a Zoom meeting on a computer or mobile device, you can download the Zoom app from the internet or play store. Otherwise, you will be prompted to download and install Zoom when you click a join link. You can also join a test meeting to familiarize yourself with Zoom.

Prerequisites: Each meeting has a unique 9, 10, or 11-digit number called a meeting ID that will be required to join a Zoom meeting. If you are joining via telephone, you will need the teleconferencing number provided in the invite.

Windows | Mac: Open the Zoom desktop client. Click Join a Meeting if you want to join without signing in/or enter the meeting ID number and your display name. Select if you would like to connect audio and/or video and click Join.

Q: How long is the session?

A: Individual counselling sessions are scheduled for 50 minutes. You and your counsellor will evaluate the need for another session. You can book for your next session by sending Ms Makhathini an email. Group sessions will last 40 minutes; however times may vary.

Q: Do I always see the same person?

A: Yes. This is because you probably do not wish to explain your issue to someone from the beginning again and rapport is often established by the end of the session. This means that the client and the counsellor have established the necessary trust and relationship so needed in the process of healing. Once the relationship has been established this makes it easier or comfortable for the client to open up and sets the tone for the therapeutic process.

Q: What happens if my connection fails or is bad?











A: Technology is great but can have its pitfalls. In the case that the connection is bad or has failed, the counsellor will try and re-establish the connection. If this is unsuccessful, you will need to book another session with Ms Makhathini.

Q: Is telepsychology appropriate for all psychological issues you may face?

A: Not always. Many guidelines caution against using it if the client is seriously mentally ill—for example, if they are at risk of hurting themselves or someone else

Q: What issues can the counsellor assist you with?

A: Counsellors can assist you with a range of psychosocial concerns relating to:

-  Stress, anxiety and depression
-  Academic motivation and concentration
-  Loneliness and adjustment to various challenges that you are currently facing
-  Conflict with loved ones
-  Drug and alcohol use
-  Pregnancy, sexuality and HIV/AIDS
-  Rape and/or sexual harassment
-  Exposure to trauma and or violence
-  Grief and bereavement
-  Any other aspect of your life

Q: Is what I say confidential?

A: Yes. What is discussed between you and your counsellor will remain confidential and not spoken about outside the counselling setting. All the CLMS counsellors are registered Psychologists with the HPCSA and by law have to keep confidentiality unless we have written consent from our clients. There are limits to confidentiality which apply if the client is suicidal or threatens to harm others.

Q: Are my records secured?

A: Counsellors keep notes of all interaction with clients as per the requirement of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) which need to be secured to maintain client confidentiality and privacy. Counsellors will ensure that all records are securely protected.

Q: Will I ever have to be referred?

A: Yes. A client may be referred to a hospital or a nearby medical facility for further assistance if the client is suicidal or homicidal. The Student Counsellor will need to assess whether telepsychology is in the best interests of the client.

Q: What else do you offer besides counselling?

A: We also offer group sessions on a variety of topics. A list of topics offered during the lockdown is uploaded on the website. Some of the group sessions include time management during the lockdown, managing myself during the lockdown, mastering stress during the lockdown, as well as a host of Q & A sessions on several topics and much more.

Q: How do I participate in a group-based activity?

A: Students are advised to contact Ms Makhathini <MakhathiniN@ukzn.ac.za> on their topic of interest selected from the list provided. Ms Makhathini will add you to the list for that chosen topic. Group sessions take up to 10 members at a time. Ms Makhathini will contact each student with the date and time and the name of the counsellor hosting the group.

Q: What if I miss the scheduled group appointment?

A: Once the session has begun you will not be able to join the group. You may be added to another group session on that specific group if there are more people interested in that topic. If not, then you would have missed the session. Alternatively, you can have a look at the uploaded documents on the topic on our websites.

Q: Can I get hold of a student counsellor at any time?

A: We are available only during working hours which are between 08:00 – 16:30, Monday to Friday.

Q: Still not sure or feeling confused?

Why not email us so we can discuss your needs and answer your questions directly, by contacting:

Ms Nomathemba Makhathini - Email: <MakhathiniN@ukzn.ac.za>