Guide to Supporting Students

For University staff
Many people can experience difficulties that impact on them emotionally, often these can be resolved after speaking with friends and family. Sometimes, professional help is needed. Many students cope well with University life but may at times feel overwhelmed and seek your help.

If a student requests your assistance it is important to help within the boundaries of what you are competent to do.
This guide has been prepared to:

Help you to recognise signs when a student is in difficulty
Provide responsive advice and to refer effectively and appropriately
Remind you of sources of support in the University
Raise your awareness of issues relating to mental health and well being

What you can do:

Listen
Give a student time to talk
Understand the situation from the student’s point of view
Help the student to feel safe
Make appropriate referrals

What you can’t do:

Solve the student’s problems
Take responsibility for the student’s emotional state or actions

The health and welfare of all members of the University community is all our concern. This guide provides advice and can be applied to dealing with a crisis and more everyday situations

It is important to be prepared for an emergency but also to be aware that they occur rarely and that expert help is available
Evaluate the situation-use your judgement:

- Is the student’s behaviour causing concern?
- How does the student seem?
- Is there other information?

- Is the student telling you there is a problem? Is there anything unusual or unpredictable about the student’s behaviour?
- Tense/irritable/sad/behaving erratically/changing mood/panicky/withdrawn or unusually quiet/agitated/disorientated/incoherent/dulled?
- Has the student spoken about a mental health condition? Do they appear under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

- Is this different to your previous experience of the student?

- Do you notice a significant change in appearance (e.g. weight change, poor personal hygiene, dishevelled appearance) or change in behaviours (staying in bed all day, handing coursework in late, missing classes, avoiding going out, avoiding friends)?

- Do you need additional information from the student?
- Do you need additional information from staff?
- Would it be helpful to consult with someone else?

- How does the student feel? Is there something wrong?
- Has anyone else noticed a problem? How has the student been managing their studies?

- Colleagues Line manager/senior colleague/student support services
What to do if the situation does not require immediate action:

If the student will accept help:
- Decide with the student who is the best person to help
- Is there something you can do? Make sure that:
  - You have the time and skills
  - It does not conflict with your role
  - You are able to:
    - Listen to the student's concerns
    - Provide reassurance
    - Offer advice and signposting
    - Meet with the student another time

If the student will not accept help:
- If you agree that someone could help
  - Make it clear that help is available.
  - Seek advice from Student Support Services
  - Monitor the situation without becoming overly involved
  - If concerns continue you should alert the student's Personal Tutor and Student Support

In all situations where you are concerned:
- Make sure to discuss the situation with Student Support Services or confidentially with a colleague. Always make a record of the conversation, and inform your line manager of your concerns
What to do if the situation is urgent

It is an urgent situation if you assess that the student is at immediate risk of harm to self or others. This could be because:

- The student is at risk of serious self-harm
- The student expresses thoughts/or plans about suicide
- The student appears out of touch with reality

**If the student will accept help**

*In office hours:* Contact Student Support Services 273935 for advice

Arrange for the student to be accompanied. Inform the appropriate person and your line manager

*Out of hours:*

Contact NHS out of hours services through NHS 24 on 111

In an emergency call 999

As soon as possible inform your line manager

**If the student will not accept help**

*In office hours:* Contact University security via Safezone or call 3327. Get immediate advice from Student Support Services 273935. Inform your line manager

*Out of hours:*

Contact NHS out of hours services through NHS 24 on 111

In an emergency call 999

As soon as possible inform your line manager

**In all situations**

- Keep calm
- Keep yourself and others safe
- Make sure a colleague is aware
- Put safety first
- Inform your line manager
- Keep a written record
Training

Developed by the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, this new e-learning package is designed to give non-specialist staff the skills, knowledge and confidence to offer a first line of support to students who may have mental health issues. Introduced by well-known TV presenter Alexander Armstrong, the package consists of six, easy-to-follow 20-minute sessions, including:

- Signs to look out for
- Key helping skills
- Knowing who else to involve
- Supporting students at risk or in crisis

http://learning.cwmt.org.uk/

Scottish Mental Health First Aid

The SMHFA course takes 12 hours to complete. It can be presented in a range of formats to suit different groups. The course must be presented by a qualified SMHFA instructor and quality is continuously monitored by NHS Health Scotland.

The course can be presented in the following formats: 2 full days, 4 half days, and 6 two hour sessions.

The course covers: guidance on being a Mental Health First Aider, attitudes to mental health issues, equalities, the recovery message, the impact of alcohol and drugs on mental health, introduction to suicide intervention, listening skills, understanding depression, how to offer first aid to someone experiencing depression, understanding anxiety, how to offer first aid to someone experiencing anxiety, understanding psychosis, how to offer first aid to someone experiencing a psychotic episode.

The course does not train people to be mental health workers. It offers basic general information about mental health problems. The knowledge presented and understanding developed in the course helps to remove stigma and fear and to give confidence in approaching a person in distress.


Rape and Abuse Support Aberdeen

Offer a range of specialist training to external organisations designed to support staff and volunteers to understand the dynamics of rape and abuse. They offer: Gender training, The Dynamics of Power and Control, Child Protection, FGM awareness and are also able to work with organisations to develop bespoke training packages, for more information/fees contact: 01224 590932

http://www.rasane.org.uk/
Notes of useful resources: