HELPING DISTRESSED STUDENTS
A GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF

The health and welfare of all members of the University is everyone’s concern. This guide gives you advice on dealing with both crises and more everyday situations.

It is important to be prepared for emergencies, but be aware they occur very rarely and that expert help is available.

YOU CAN:
- Listen
- Give the student time to talk
- Be sympathetic and not dismissive
- Understand the situation from his/her point of view
- Make appropriate referrals
- Help the student to feel contained

YOU CAN’T:
- Solve all the students’ problems
- Take responsibility for his/her emotional state or actions

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WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IN NON-URGENT SITUATIONS

The situation is not urgent if there is no immediate risk to the student, or others, although the student may be:

- Bereaved
- Depressed, anxious, generally
- Having unexplained study or money problems
- Homesick, lonely and isolated
- Having problems with relationships
- Suffering from low self-esteem

If the student will accept help:

- Decide who is the best person to help.
- You have the time and/or skill.
- It does not conflict with your role.
- You are able to:
  - Listen to the student’s concerns
  - Offer practical advice
  - Provide reassurance
  - Show your concern by following up your conversation at another time

If the student will not accept help:

- You can make it clear that you will help if the student changes his/her mind.
- Seek advice from Student Services (see page 4).
- You can monitor the situation.
- You should alert the student’s Adviser of Studies or other relevant person, about continuing concerns.

If you feel someone else should help the student:

- Are you clear what the student needs? (see page 4 and 7)
- You should alert the student’s Adviser of Studies or other relevant person, about continuing concerns.
- You can make it clear that you will help if the student changes his/her mind.
- Seek advice from Student Services (see page 4).
- You can monitor the situation.
- You should alert the student’s Adviser of Studies or other relevant person, about continuing concerns.

If you feel you could help the student:

- You are able to:
  - Listen to the student’s concerns
  - Offer practical advice
  - Provide reassurance
  - Show your concern by following up your conversation at another time

In all situations:

- Debrief by talking the situation through with a colleague or the Counselling & Psychological Services. Make a record of your concerns and inform others as appropriate.
The situation is urgent if you believe or are given information that the student may be at risk of harm to him/herself or others. You are concerned for one or more of the following reasons. The student:

May be at risk of serious self-harm
Seems very disorientated and out of touch with reality
Has completely stopped functioning
Is violent or threatening violence to people or property

In these circumstances the University Crisis Team helps provide central support for these situations.

WHAT SORT OF SUPPORT DOES THE STUDENT NEED?

Disability Services
The student is concerned about his/her use of alcohol and drugs.

GP or Health Service
The student:
• Avoids starting or finishing work
• Experiences panic attacks or extreme anxiety
• Has perfectionist tendencies
• Works unrealistic hours

Counselling & Psychological Services
The problem is due to loss of motivation or difficulty concentrating.

School
Symptoms could be:
• Signs of depression
• Low mood/energy
• Difficulty sleeping
• General loss of interest/concentration
• Loss of self-confidence
• Tiredness

Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service
There is a problem of discrimination, harrassment or complaint.

SRC Advice Centre
There is a problem related to accommodation.

Accommodation Services
The student needs are related to religion or spirituality.

Interfaith Chaplain

International Student Support

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IN URGENT SITUATIONS

The situation is urgent if you believe or are given information that the student may be at risk of harm to him/herself or others. You are concerned for one or more of the following reasons. The student:

May be at risk of serious self-harm
Seems very disorientated and out of touch with reality
Has completely stopped functioning
Is violent or threatening violence to people or property

In these circumstances the University Crisis Team helps provide central support for these situations.

ACCESSING CRISIS TEAM:

Phone Security: +44 (0) 141 330 4444 (during and out of office hours).

Have as much information to hand about the situation as possible. If the situation is immediately life threatening, call the emergency services.

IMMEDIATE DANGER: 999

BENEFICIAL INFORMATION TO COLLECT:

Name and registration number of student
Where do they stay – address and phone details
Contact details of any family or friends to help support
GP’s name and practice
Details of the incident and any other relevant information: Has it happened before? Are they on any medication? Have they registered with the Counselling or Disability Services?

ALSO, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Try to stay calm
Whenever possible make sure you have back-up available
Engage with the student if possible
Always note the incident and details of action taken in Support Works
Ensure to debrief by talking the situation through with a colleague or with someone in the Counselling & Psychological Services

MORE INFORMATION:

• See the MyGlasgow Students site: www.glasgow.ac.uk/students
• Contact the Student Services Enquiry Team (SSET) on +44 (0) 141 330 7000

REMEMBER: Friends and family can be a source of support!
### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:
**IDENTIFYING AND OFFERING SUPPORT**

**Identifying sources of support:**

- It is not always possible to know what the best source of support might be. The student may have more than one problem, or the initial problem may not be the most central.

- If in doubt about the available or most suitable services, contact the Student Services Enquiry Team.

- It is important in the first instance to refer the student to somewhere that is acceptable to him/her.

- A further referral can be made later, if appropriate.

**If you think the student is in crisis, phone: +44 (0) 141 330 4444**

**If you offer support yourself, you must ensure that:**

- You have sufficient within the context of your other commitments to do this.

- It does not conflict with other aspects of your role.

- You have access to colleague support.

- You seek advice from colleagues or Student Services if you have persistent concerns.

**Remember: you are not solely responsible for the student’s emotional state**

**Confidentiality:**

- Do not disclose personal information about students to anyone outside the University, including parents, without the student’s explicit consent.

- If parents wish to contact the student, you can offer to forward a communication or tell the student they have been in touch.

- Do not promise absolute confidentiality and advise the student that you may have to consult a colleague.

- Treat personal information about students with discretion.

**The Counselling & Psychological Services offer a confidential consultation service to all staff who may wish to discuss their concerns about a student in difficulty.**
KEY CONTACTS: INTERNAL

STUDENT SERVICES ENQUIRY TEAM (SSET)
If in doubt contact the Student Services Enquiry Team (SSET) in non-urgent situations.
Monday to Tuesday, 0900 - 1700
Wednesday, 0930 - 1700
Thursday to Friday, 0900 - 1700
Level 2, The Fraser Building
University Avenue
Glasgow G12 8QQ
Telephone: +44 (0) 141 330 7000
Email: studentservices@glasgow.ac.uk
Web: www.glasgow.ac.uk/sset

COUNSELLING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
During office hours this Service will provide a priority response if a student is in a mental health crisis and/or staff need advice.
Monday to Friday, 0900 - 1700
67 South Park Avenue
Glasgow G12 8LE
Telephone: + 44 (0) 141 330 4528
Email: studentcounselling@glasgow.ac.uk
Web: www.glasgow.ac.uk/counselling

CRISIS TEAM
Contact the Team if you think a student is in crisis and are unsure what to do.
Phone Security: +44 (0) 141 330 4444 (24 hours)
Have as much information to hand about the situation as possible.
If the situation is immediately life threatening, call the emergency services.