

Further information

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Identifying and Responding to Students in Difficulty

A guide for staff

Contents

02 Introduction

03 Section 1: Your responsibility towards students in difficulty

- 04 Staff with a specific role in student support
 - Personal tutors
 - Disability Liaison Officers
 - Student Support Officers
 - Hall tutors
 - Wardens
 - Staff in specialist services
- 06 Staff who support students as a first point of contact
 - Administrative and secretarial staff in schools and departments
 - Laboratory and technical staff
 - Hall secretaries
- 06 Staff with no formal role in student support but who have regular contact with students
 - Cleaning, catering, portering and bar staff
- 07 Staff with no formal role in student support who are on call to respond to difficult situations
 - Security staff

09 Section 2: Initial responses to a request for help

- 10 Listening
- 10 Assessment
- 10 Mental health problems
- 11 How do you know there is a problem?

13 Section 3: Your guide to referrals

- 14 When?
- 14 Where?
- 14 How?
- 15 When a student doesn't want to be referred
- 17 What sort of support does the student need?

19 Section 4: Responding to more complex situations

- 20 If concerns are raised by others
- 20 If the student denies there is a problem

21 Section 5: Urgent situations

- 22 Responding to students in a heightened emotional state
- 23 When a student appears to be suicidal
- 25 What do you do next?

27 Section 6: Confidentiality and its limits

- 28 Talking to parents

29 Section 7: When to consult

31 Section 8: Key points

33 Section 9: Appendices

- 34 Appendix 1: Support services in the University
- 36 Appendix 2: Support services in Nottingham
- 37 Appendix 3: University policy on the release of personal information
- 38 Appendix 4: University policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Introduction

A number of students will encounter problems during their time here and members of staff may be called on to provide some help. The problems may be academic, personal or practical and difficulties in one area can often have an impact on other areas of the student's life. Some students may directly approach staff members to ask for support. Others may be reluctant to ask and try to struggle on but problems may become apparent. For example, a student may appear agitated or distressed, or stop attending lectures and stay in their room.

What to do about this will depend on a number of factors:

- The staff member's role in the University and whether they have a specific responsibility for supporting students.
- The seriousness and urgency of the situation.
- The staff member's skill and experience in helping others.
- The amount of time and resources available.

Some members of staff (for example, personal tutors, Disability Liaison Officers, hall wardens and tutors) have a defined role in supporting students. Those who do not have this formal role but who have contact with students may notice that something is wrong or be approached by students with personal difficulties.

This guide is intended to help members of staff to:

- clarify their own role and the limits of their responsibility towards students in difficulty
- work out when (and when not) to intervene
- identify problems
- decide what to do about them

It also aims to provide some strategies for dealing with more complex and difficult situations.

Section 1: Your responsibility towards students in difficulty

Staff with a specific role in student support

Personal tutors

The University regards this role as having central importance to the support of students' progress and development on an individual basis. The personal tutor fulfils key academic and pastoral functions, often closely interrelated, by providing a clear and crucial point of contact for the individual student in their interactions with the institution.

Along with other members of staff, the personal tutor has a responsibility to respond to students who ask for help. This may involve offering direct support (particularly if the problem is a course-related issue) or helping the student to obtain appropriate support elsewhere.

Students do not always express problems directly or ask for help. They may feel embarrassed or concerned about the consequences of telling someone in their school or department or simply hope that the problem will go away. It is therefore an important part of the personal tutor's role to identify when there may be problems which are impeding the student's progress (academic or personal) which are not raised directly by the student.

There may be indications in the student's academic work that all is not well. The personal tutor is the only person who has an overview of the student's work and personal development, and is therefore in the best position to recognise when there may be a problem. Other indicators of problems can be found on pages 11-12.

It is not always possible, however, to know that something is wrong, particularly if the difficulties predate the student's university career and there is no observable change in behaviour or appearance. Tutors are not expected to do the impossible, but they are in a good position to be aware of what is happening to their tutees. Support and consultation are available to tutors from the Senior Tutor, Head of School and other experienced colleagues within the student's school.

Summary of responsibilities of personal tutors

- Maintaining regular contact with tutees may help to contain their anxiety and so prevent problems from developing.
- Identifying problems (where possible): see How do you know there is a problem? (pages 11-12).

- Assessing the situation: see Assessment (page 10).
- Deciding what to do next: see What do you do next? (pages 25-26).
- Referring on, where necessary, to the appropriate service: see What sort of support does the student need? (pages 17-18).

Disability Liaison Officers

Each school appoints a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) to provide a source of reference, advice and guidance for members of staff and students in the school about disability issues and support.

Students who are concerned about a disability may approach the DLO directly or may be referred by another member of staff. The role of the DLO is to liaise with colleagues to ensure that the school responds appropriately to the needs of the student and that they are referred to other sources of support as necessary. Students with mental health difficulties may be referred to Academic Support for specialist study advice and to their GP or the University Counselling Service (UCS) for medical or psychological support or to the Mental Health Advisers.

There may be times when students bring personal problems to the DLO, especially if a positive relationship has been established. An initial sympathetic response may be sufficient but if further support is needed, information about other relevant sources of specialist help should be provided, so the student can be appropriately referred.

Summary of responsibilities of Disability Liaison Officers

- Informing relevant colleagues about students who have a disability and indicating available sources of information about managing the teaching and learning environment in an appropriate way.
- Where necessary, liaising with the student's personal tutor about referral for specialist help.
- Responding to problems presented directly by students by making an initial assessment and deciding on a course of action (see page 10).
- Referring on to the student's personal tutor or to others in specialist services as appropriate.

Student Support Officers

A number of schools have appointed a Student Support Officer whose role is to offer some pastoral support to students in difficulty and to be a central point of contact for extenuating circumstances applications. If the student's problems are significantly affecting their wellbeing or academic work they may liaise with academic staff and specialist support staff. Other staff in the school may refer students to them, but if the student needs more time or specialist support than the Student Support Officers can realistically offer, they may need to refer them on to central University support services or to the student's personal tutor.

As the staff in these posts may have full- or part-time contracts and different job descriptions, the nature and amount of help they are able to offer students will also vary. Further clarification may be provided by student handbooks in those schools with a Student Support Officer.

Hall tutors

Support for students in University catered halls of residence is provided by hall tutors and wardens. This is especially helpful in the first few weeks and months when students are adjusting to life at the University. Hall tutors play an important part in the welcoming process on the first day when they meet and greet the new arrivals. They continue to do this in the following weeks when they meet their tutees in small groups and provide advice and guidance on the University and hall systems.

It can be very tempting when welcoming new students to tell them what a good time they are going to have. More realistically, it is better to let them know that it is also a normal part of student life to encounter difficulties. Most students in difficulty believe that they are part of a tiny minority of people who 'can't cope'. It can be enormously reassuring to hear that lots of people have difficulty settling in during the first few weeks and months.

For many students, simply knowing that there is someone they can go to if necessary (and indeed, someone who knows their name) can help them to contain initial anxieties and get by without seeking help.

The hall tutor has a responsibility to be available for tutees who want to come and talk to them. Each hall has its own guidelines as to how much tutors should be available.

In order to ensure that tutors are able to get on with their own lives and work, it is important to set out clearly the limits to the times when they are available and communicate these to students.

Support and consultation within the hall are available to tutors from the Warden or Deputy Warden.

Wardens

Wardens and Deputy Wardens

Students may take their problems directly to the Warden or Deputy Warden. However, more often the role of Wardens and Deputy Wardens is to ensure that the support system in the hall is working effectively, to provide support and consultation to the hall tutors and to become involved directly only in more complex or serious situations.

Summary of responsibilities of hall tutors, Wardens and Deputy Wardens

- Regular availability and accessibility may help to contain anxiety and prevent problems.
- Identifying indicators of major problems; for example, when a student stays in their room for long periods (see pages 11-12).
- Responding to problems students present by making an initial assessment and deciding on a course of action (see pages 10 and 25-26).
- Responding to concerns about students brought by others; for example, friends or other hall staff.
- Referring on to the personal tutor, Disability Liaison Officer or one or more of the specialist services as appropriate (see pages 17-18).
- Hall tutors – informing/consulting with the Warden or Deputy Warden as soon as possible if a problem seems serious or urgent.

Staff in specialist services

The University has a number of specialist services (see Appendix 1, page 34, for contact details and opening hours).

Staff in these services work in their own area of expertise but also have a role in signposting students to other relevant sources of help. If a student has formed a positive relationship with a staff member in one service, they may disclose other problems, which should then be referred on to the appropriate service.

Summary of responsibilities

- Deal with own area of responsibility and refer to other services as appropriate (see pages 17-18).

Staff who support students as a first point of contact

A number of staff members in the University, particularly in schools, departments and residences, have an informal role in supporting students.

Students may often find it easier to talk to someone who is not directly involved in assessing their work and who may appear more approachable. This group includes administrative and secretarial staff in schools and departments, laboratory staff and hall secretaries.

The University sees this role as being a first point of contact; someone who will listen sympathetically, offer some practical advice within their own area of work and refer the student on to another member of staff or service if necessary.

Summary of responsibilities

- Responding to requests for advice and information when this falls within the staff member's role.
- Listening sympathetically when students bring problems or express emotional distress.
- Making an assessment as to whether this is enough to resolve the situation or whether more is needed (see pages 10 and 25-26).
- Referring on where necessary to the appropriate person or service (see pages 17-18).
- Informing the student's personal tutor if there is concern or if the problem is affecting the student's academic work (staff in schools and departments) or informing the hall tutor, Warden or Deputy Warden if the student is living in a hall of residence.

Staff with no formal role in student support but who have regular contact with students

Some staff members in the University have regular informal contact with students and may get to know them quite well. This applies particularly to staff in residences; for example, cleaning, catering and bar staff and porters.

In spite of having no formal role, or perhaps because of this, students may talk to members of staff in these groups because they seem approachable. Having staff members around who are willing to listen can make a university of this size seem a friendlier place.

Summary of responsibilities

- Listen sympathetically – this may be sufficient.
- If more help is needed, encourage the student to talk to someone who has a responsibility for student support. If it is clear that the problem is in a particular area, it may be possible to suggest the appropriate person (see pages 17-18). If it is not clear, encourage the person to seek advice from their personal tutor.
- If there are serious concerns about the student, a line manager should be alerted.

Staff with no formal role in student support who are on call to respond to difficult situations

Security staff may be called to deal with situations where a student is disturbing others or causing concern. Some assessment needs to be made as to what is going on; for example, whether the student has simply had too much to drink, is under the influence of drugs or has mental health difficulties. In some situations, more than one of these circumstances may apply. It is not always easy for staff who have no previous knowledge of the student to know what may be happening. There may be other people who can provide information; for example, whether this behaviour is out of character or if there have been previous concerns about the student.

Situations involving drunkenness or drugs are most likely to occur in the evenings and at night. As long as there is no obvious risk to the student or others, the main focus will be to get the student home safely, possibly with help from friends or housemates, and from the duty tutor if the student is living in one of the University halls of residence.

If neither alcohol nor drugs appear to be the main problem, it will be important to try to obtain further information about the student from hall staff or friends.

Summary of responsibilities

- Deal with any immediate risk to the student, other people or property by taking appropriate action; for example, applying first aid or contacting the emergency services.
- If there does not appear to be an immediate risk, make a judgement about what is going on, based on direct observation and any information which can be obtained from others.
- Contact the duty tutor if the student is living in a hall of residence.
- If there are concerns about the student's mental health but there does not appear to be an immediate risk, it may be possible to help the student to calm down by encouraging them to talk about what it is that is distressing them and then suggesting where further help may be obtained (see pages 17-18).
- If the concerns are more immediate, it may be possible to contact a member of staff who knows the student and who can take responsibility for deciding what to do next. If it is not possible to do this and you are not certain of the best course of action, advice can be obtained from the following sources: During normal surgery hours you can contact the student's GP. If you are unable to find out who the GP is or if it is outside normal surgery hours, contact NHS 111. If the situation needs an urgent response, the student can go to the Emergency Department at the Queen's Medical Centre if it appears to be safe for them to do so. If not, contact the emergency services to send an ambulance.
- Follow normal policies on reporting the situation.

For many students, simply knowing that there is someone they can go to if necessary (and indeed, someone who knows their name) can help them to contain initial anxieties and get by without seeking help.

Section 2: Initial responses to a request for help

Listening

In busy lives, listening can often be fairly casual. We may be distracted by work or other pressures. When we are talking to someone else we can usually tell if the person is attentive. When a student asks to talk to someone about a personal difficulty, it is important to try to switch off the other pressures and to listen in a more focused way.

- Make clear how much time is available. This may also help the student to work out how much time they need. If there is an urgent deadline or an imminent appointment, say so and offer time later. In most situations this will be acceptable to the student. It is usually better to offer a specific time, rather than simply to ask the person to come back later, which they will often experience as a brush-off.
- If the person appears to be very agitated or upset and is unable or unwilling to wait, a brief meeting should be offered immediately, if possible, to be followed up at a specified time soon afterwards. Alternatively the student could be directed to someone who can offer time immediately (after checking this out with the colleague concerned).
- Try to ensure that the time offered is free from interruptions and that there is a private space. This is not always possible for staff who do not have their own offices.
- Listening can be therapeutic in itself and may be enough to help the student work out their own way of dealing with the situation.

Assessment

When listening to the student, part of the task is to make sense of what is being said and to decide what kind of response might be helpful. It can be useful to focus on the following questions as the basis of a rough and ready assessment. These are questions to reflect on, rather than to directly ask the student. Staff members are not expected to diagnose mental health problems.

What is going on?

- What seems to be the main issue? Is the problem as presented by the student the whole story or are there other problems which are not being directly expressed?
- Does the problem seem to be serious? Is it having a major impact on the student's wellbeing?
- How urgent is the problem? Is the student at risk in some way?

What to do next?

- Can the situation be resolved by a brief intervention; for example, advice or sympathetic listening?
- Is it appropriate to your role to offer this? Do you have the time and ability to do so?
- Is specialist help required? If so, from whom?
- Is there a need to act quickly?
- Is there a need to inform or consult with someone else?

Mental health problems

Mental health is not fixed and static but varies for all of us over time. On some days we feel better than others, as also happens with physical health. The two are often linked. Distress is a healthy reaction to some events.

In differentiating mental ill health from the normal range of human emotions, the following criteria may be helpful:

- Unusual or unexplained symptoms; for example, hallucinations or delusions which do not follow the use of any mind-altering substances.
- A sudden and dramatic change in behaviour or personality.
- Duration of symptoms; for example, persistence of depressive symptoms or of high levels of anxiety.
- Intensity: the feelings or symptoms may seem overwhelming or unmanageable.
- Effects: the symptoms interfere with normal functioning.

How do you know there is a problem?



Section 3:

Your guide to referrals

The term referral is used throughout this guide to describe two approaches:

- Talking informally to a student about a particular service and encouraging them to make contact.
- Making a more formal approach to a service on behalf of a student by telephone or in writing.

When to refer?

- When the problem needs specialist help.
- When the problem is complex or serious.
- When there would be a conflict with other aspects of your role if you offer support yourself.
- When the situation needs more time than you can offer.

Where to refer?

It is not always possible to know what the best source of support might be. There may be more than one problem or the initial problem may not be the most central. What is most important in the first instance is to guide the student to a service that is acceptable to them. A further referral can be made later if appropriate. See: What sort of support does the student need? (pages 17-18).

Usually this will be to one of the specialist services on campus and staff in these services will refer on to other sources of help if they think it appropriate. If a student does not want to use on-campus services, they can be helped to find appropriate support elsewhere. See Appendix 2 (page 36) for a list of useful off-campus services.

How to refer?

It is usually best if a student can take the initiative to approach a service. There may, however, be times when this seems too difficult for the student. It may then be helpful for the staff member concerned to take a more active role in either telephoning or writing to the appropriate service to make an appointment on their behalf.

Those who do not have a formal student support role may encourage the student to talk to someone who does have this role and who may be able to help those students who want help but do not feel able to approach the specialist services directly.

When a student doesn't want to be referred but wants to continue to talk to you

It may be that once you have been through the processes outlined on page 14, the student tells you that you have been so helpful and sympathetic that they would prefer to talk to you than to see someone else.

Explaining your role

It is often enough to explain to the student that you are not in a position to offer further help since it isn't appropriate to your role or you lack the specialist expertise or the time to give ongoing support.

Exploring the student's concerns

If the student is worried about going to see someone else, it may help to explore this in more detail. For example, a student may be worried about talking to someone involved in assessing their work or believe that there would be a stigma attached to seeing a counsellor. If it is not possible to reassure the student, try to suggest an alternative person for them to talk to (see Appendix 1, page 34).

Setting clear limits

Having revealed personal difficulties, the student may wish/expect to continue to receive further support from you and ask for quite a lot of your time. If they are unwilling to be referred to someone in a more appropriate role, you may experience quite a lot of pressure to provide this support directly. You may feel concern for the student and worry that they may feel rejected if you do not offer support. It can also feel flattering to be sought out in this way. It is, however, important to set some limits, otherwise you may end up feeling out of your depth and spending more time than you can afford on one student. This can be done in a positive way by letting the student know how much time can be offered and making clear the limits to the support that you can offer.

Personal tutors, for example, need to make it clear that their role is to help the student with academic difficulties created by the situation, not to deal with personal problems directly. It may be necessary to keep reminding the student of the specialist help available to them.

Providing information

It can be useful to guide the student towards sources of information about their specific difficulty. The University Counselling Service has produced a series of leaflets on issues such as bereavement, anxiety, depression and eating difficulties. These are available in various places across the University. Copies can be obtained from the University Counselling Service or accessed from their website. This and other useful websites are listed in Appendix 1 (page 34).

Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate help is offered to the student, not to resolve the problem. It is important to communicate concerns about a student to a line manager or other colleagues as appropriate and not to take sole responsibility for the situation.

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What sort of support does the student need?

Has the student told you directly about a psychological problem?

Eg bereavement, relationship breakdown, eating disorder

University Counselling Service

Is there a clear health problem?

GP or Cripps Health Centre

Is there a practical or University-related problem?

Eg tenancy, legal, financial, grievance, academic appeal

Student Advice Centre

Is there anxiety about a particular study problem or academic issue?

Study skills
Specific Learning Difficulties (eg dyslexia)
Learning affected by a disability (eg hearing impairment)

Personal tutor or DLO

Academic Support (Student Services)

Financial Support Team (Student Services)

Does the student want to apply for a bursary or scholarship, student loan or support funds?

If an international student:

Are there practical problems concerning immigration or other welfare issues or academic/language issues?

International Support Services Team

Centre for English Language Education (CELE)

Is there a disability-related accommodation, academic or transportation issue?

Disability Support Team

Is there a problem due to loss of motivation or difficulty concentrating?

The student could be depressed. Symptoms include: low mood, low energy, difficulty sleeping, general loss of interest, loss of self-confidence

University Counselling Service

GP or Cripps Health Centre

University Counselling Service

GP or Cripps Health Centre

Does the student experience panic attacks or disabling anxiety?

Works unrealistic hours
Avoids starting or finishing work
Perfectionist tendencies

Is the student concerned about their use of alcohol or drugs?

Mental Health Advisers

University Counselling Service

GP or Cripps Health Centre

Is the student concerned about religious or spiritual beliefs or adversely affected by life events?

Chaplaincy

Section 4: Responding to more complex situations

If concerns are raised by others

From time to time staff may be approached by students who are concerned about a friend. Concerns may also be raised by colleagues who do not have a formal support role. There are a number of possible courses of action:

- Use your own observation of the situation to help you to decide if/when to intervene.
- Encourage those who approached you to persuade the person to seek help directly, either from you or another appropriate person. It may help to provide them with some relevant information (a leaflet, for example) to give to the student.
- Talk to the student yourself, either by enquiring generally about their wellbeing or, with the agreement of those who approached you, let them know that concerns have been expressed.
- Make a note of the information and the course of action you took.

If the student denies there is a problem

It may be helpful to challenge the denial gently by letting the student know that this is not how the situation appears. Let the student know why there are concerns; for example, if there has been a deterioration in the quality of academic work, or if they have changed in some important way.

If the student refuses to acknowledge the problem or discuss the situation, it may still be helpful to pass on sources of information and support so the student can access this later. In addition, you may wish to discuss the situation with one of the Mental Health Advisers (see Appendix 1, page 34).

If there are serious concerns, or if the student's behaviour is causing problems for others, consult a line manager or another senior colleague.

Section 5: Urgent situations

A prompt response is required if there is reason to believe that:

- a student may be at risk of attempting suicide
- they may be at risk of hurting themselves or someone else
- they have stopped functioning academically or in other areas of life; for example, spending long periods in bed
- their behaviour appears to be significantly odd and either this is not part of a longstanding problem or there may be a longstanding problem which has deteriorated: for example, the person appears highly agitated and out of touch with reality

Those with a direct student support role should follow the guidelines on pages 25-26.

Staff who do not have a formal support role should inform a line manager or a senior colleague as soon as possible. The person informed should either act on the guidelines directly or inform someone who will.

In situations where there is an immediate risk, call the emergency services, either directly on 999 or through Security on extension 8888. Security should always be notified if the emergency services are called.

Responding to students in a heightened emotional state

From time to time staff may be called on to deal with a student who is agitated, angry or upset. Drugs or alcohol may be a factor or the student may have made an attempt at harming themselves. These situations are most frequently encountered in student residences. In such circumstances, the University has a legal as well as moral responsibility to act in the best interests of the student, especially if the student lacks the ability to do so.

If there is any injury, ensure that the student receives appropriate medical attention. If they refuse, a judgement will have to be made as to the seriousness of the situation (ie whether to override the student's refusal of help and call for an ambulance).

In addition, staff who have a formal student support role should consider the following steps:

- Allow the student space to discuss what is distressing them. If there is only limited time available, there may be a need to provide a brief intervention and offer more time later. Offer support to any other students who may have been affected by the situation.
- Plan with the student where they can access support in the future to help to avert further crises.
- If the student is agitated or angry, it will help to try to appear calm and in control of the situation, even if you don't feel that way. It may help to sit down and persuade the student to do likewise.
- When the student is under the influence of alcohol or drugs it will not be possible to resolve any problems. It will be helpful to encourage them to come back and talk to you or another member of staff when they are calmer. If the student is creating a disturbance, or if you are concerned about your personal safety, contact Security.
- It should not be necessary to spend hours sitting with a student. Giving the student some time and then following this up later can often be more useful as it is giving a message that the anxiety/distress can be managed.
- If you think the student is at risk, the GP can be contacted with or without the student's consent (see page 23). **In situations when students are unwilling or unable to say who their GP is, the doctors at the University Health Centre have agreed that they will see such students in an emergency.**
- Ensure that relevant colleagues are informed about the situation. Where possible, you may wish to involve someone else in helping you to deal with the situation. Problems occurring at night can be particularly difficult as there are fewer resources available to call on for support and incidents can often seem worse at night. Advice on physical or psychological concerns can be obtained from NHS 111. The University Security Team is available 24 hours a day.

When a student appears to be suicidal

In very rare situations a student may indicate that they are planning a suicide attempt. It is important to try to ensure that the student gets medical help as soon as possible. How this is achieved will depend on the circumstances.

During surgery opening hours, and if the student is willing to see a doctor, it may be enough to contact the surgery to explain the situation and make an emergency appointment. Check with the student that they feel safe to go alone. Having someone listen and take them seriously may be sufficient containment for the student to get help. If you do not think it is safe to leave the student alone, you will need to find someone to accompany the student or to stay until a GP can visit. You may decide to do this yourself, but it is important that you only do this if you feel safe to do so. If you have any concerns about personal safety, contact the emergency services and Security.

Outside surgery hours, urgent medical and psychiatric help can be obtained from the Emergency Department at the Queen's Medical Centre.

What to do if you are concerned and the person refuses medical help

The person's consent can be overridden if you think that they are at risk.

- Contact the person's GP (or Cripps Health Centre if the GP is not known) and ask for an urgent visit. Ideally, someone should stay with the person until the GP arrives. If you do not feel it would be safe for you to do so, contact Security.
- If the student is actively behaving in a suicidal way, contact the emergency services immediately (either by dialling 999 directly and then notifying Security or through Security on extension 8888). It will help if you can do this discreetly so as not to alarm the student. If possible, and it feels safe to do so, ask another member of staff who knows the student to stay with them while you arrange this.

When the risk appears to be less imminent, but a student reveals suicidal feelings, it is important to take the person seriously, even if you have some doubts as to whether a suicide attempt will be made. It will be important to encourage the student to see a GP, to go to the University Counselling Service or to obtain some other psychological support that is acceptable to them. If the student is unwilling to access help it may be helpful to discuss the situation with one of the Mental Health Advisers.

It is not always possible to prevent suicide. Even when a great deal of care and support is offered someone who is very determined may still go ahead. It is important not to feel personally responsible for the situation.

If you have been involved with a student who has killed themselves or who has made a suicide attempt, it may be helpful to talk with one of the counsellors or chaplains or someone in a similar role. The chaplains offer support to all members of the University community, Christians and non-Christians. They can also put people in touch with contacts for other faiths.

In situations where there is an immediate risk, call the emergency services, either directly on 999 or through Security on extension 8888. Security should always be notified if the emergency services are called.

What do you do next?



* If a student is not registered with a GP or cannot tell you who the GP is contact Cripps Health Centre and ask for urgent advice. Out of surgery hours, contact NHS 111.

Section 6: Confidentiality and its limits

When a student discusses personal problems with a member of staff, it is important for them to feel that the person can be trusted not to broadcast the information, unless the student asks for it to be passed on.

This applies to all members of staff but particularly those with a designated role in student support. Most members of staff do not, however, have a professional duty to maintain absolute confidentiality within the University and indeed it is important to be able to consult when necessary. What is important is discretion, which means passing on personal information only on a 'need-to-know' basis.

If a student insists that they need to talk to someone in confidence, there are services on campus which are professionally bound to maintain confidentiality: the GPs, chaplains, counsellors and the Mental Health Advisers.

Talking to parents

It is not uncommon for staff in schools and halls of residence to be asked to speak to concerned parents. While it may be helpful for the parents to be offered a sympathetic ear, the University's position under the Data Protection Act is that personal information must not be disclosed to anyone outside the University. Enquiries may be answered with an offer to forward a message from the parents to the student concerned. It will be important to make clear that it will not be possible to report back to the parent about any contact with the student. If a parent expresses particular concern, an offer to talk to the student and check how they are may be helpful (see Appendix 3, page 37).

Section 7: When to consult

Inform your line manager or another senior colleague if:

- you have serious concerns about a student
- you feel you are getting out of your depth
- you think there may be legal issues
- you are not sure of the best course of action

You can also talk to someone in one of the specialist services; for example, the University Counselling Service, the Disability Support Team, Academic Support or the Mental Health Advisers:

- to check where might be the best place to refer a student
- to talk over the situation more generally

The University Counselling Service and the Mental Health Advisers provide a consultation service to all staff who may be concerned about a student.

Section 8: Key points

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- **Consult with others if you think the student's problems may be serious or if you are uncertain what action to take.**
 - **Be clear about what is realistic for you to deal with yourself.**
Decisions about what support to offer will depend on your role, whether you have relevant expertise and the time available to you.
 - **Situations requiring immediate action are rare.**
If you are in doubt about how to respond to a student, it is nearly always possible to give yourself time by saying that you need to think over what is the best way to help and arranging to see the person again.
 - **Ensure that you have information about other support services on campus which you can pass on to students.**

Section 9: Appendices

Appendix 1: Support services in the University

Student Services Centres

The centres are the first point of contact for the following services:

- Advice and support on all student funding and finance
- Payment of fees
- IT support
- Production of documentation (letters and transcripts)
- Disability Support
- Academic Support (general study support, dyslexia assessment and support, ACCESS Centre)
- Online information and self-help facilities

Location: Portland Building, University Park; Amenities Building, Jubilee; Main Building, Sutton Bonington

Open: 9.30am-5pm, Monday to Friday (University Park). For opening hours of other centres, see www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/student-servicescentres

t: 0115 951 3710 University Park and Jubilee
t: 0115 951 6004 Sutton Bonington
e: ssc@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.nottingham.ac.uk/ssc

University Counselling Service

Offers a confidential service from professionally qualified counsellors for a wide range of issues, including anxiety, depression, family concerns and relationship issues.

Location: The Orchards, University Park
Open: 9am-1pm, 2-4.30pm, Monday to Friday
Telephone or call in to make an appointment
t: 0115 951 3695; internal extension 13695
e: counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling

Cripps Health Centre

Open

Surgery hours: 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday
GP appointment times: 8am-12pm, 2-5pm, Monday to Friday

Out-of-hours calls will be re-routed to NHS 111. Note that 111 is a freephone number but you may not be able to dial from a University telephone.
t: 0115 846 8888; internal extension 68888
w: www.unhs.co.uk

Mental Health Advisers

t: 0115 846 8896; internal extension 68896
e: mh-support@nottingham.ac.uk

International Office Support Services Team

Provides practical advice and support for all students whose home is outside the United Kingdom on immigration regulations, employment, visas, welfare and personal matters. Also organises social events.

Location: YANG Fujia Building, Jubilee
Drop-in: 1pm-4pm, Monday to Friday
Telephone service: 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday
t: 0115 951 5247; internal extension 15247
e: international-support@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/support

Centre for English Language Education (CELE)

Provides English language support for international students.

Location: YANG Fujia Building, Jubilee
t: 0115 951 4405; internal extension 14405
e: cele-enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.cele.nottingham.ac.uk

Student Advice Centre (Students' Union)

Professional welfare and education advisers who can offer help on a wide range of concerns including housing, finances, employment and legal rights. They also offer advice on academic issues such as appeals, extenuating circumstances and disciplinary matters.

Location: Portland Building, University Park
Open term-time: 9am-4pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday; 10am-5pm, Wednesday
Open vacation: 9am-4pm, Monday to Friday
t: 0115 846 8730; internal extension 68730
e: student-advice-centre@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/helpadvice

Chaplains and faith advisers

Offer support and advice to all members of the University community, students and staff, Christians and non-Christians. They also have information on contacts for other faiths.

Location: Portland Building, University Park
t: 0115 951 3931; internal extension 13931
e: chaplains@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.nottingham.ac.uk/chaplains

Accommodation Services

Location: Portland Building, University Park
Open: 9.30am-4pm, Monday to Friday
t: 0115 951 3697; internal extension 13697
e (undergraduates): ugaccommodation@nottingham.ac.uk
e (postgraduates): pgaccommodation@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.nottingham.ac.uk/accommodation

Support in University residences

All catered and non-catered halls of residence have a Warden or Deputy Warden who has responsibility for the welfare of students when they are in halls. In catered halls each student will be allocated a hall tutor who is available to offer advice and support and who is accountable to the Warden or Deputy Warden. The Students' Union also has welfare reps in all University undergraduate residences, including self-catering accommodation, who offer informal support and advice.

Support in schools

Each school has a Senior Tutor who has overall responsibility for the personal tutoring system in schools. They offer support and guidance to personal tutors and will assist students in cases where the student feels unable to approach the personal tutor. There is also a Disability Liaison Officer in each school.

Nightline

Confidential listening and information service, run by students.
Available: 7pm-8am seven nights a week, term-time only
t: 0115 951 4985; internal extension 14985
w: www.nottinghamnightline.co.uk

Appendix 2: Support services in Nottingham

Last Orders

Offers free, practical and confidential advice to people who want to reduce their drinking. There is a weekly clinic at Cripps Health Centre to which students can be referred by their GP. People can also refer themselves by calling the number below.
Available: 9-5pm, Monday to Friday
t: 0115 970 9590
w: www.last-orders.org

EDISS Eating Disorders in Student Services (NHS)

A confidential weekly clinic offering advice and support about eating difficulties.

Location: Meeting Room, Cripps Health Centre (please enter via Occupational Health entrance)
Drop in: 10am-12pm and 2-4pm, Wednesday
e: not-tr.ediss@nhs.net

Health Shop

A drop-in agency which provides free and confidential information and support about sexual health and drug use.

Location: 12 Broad Street, Hockley, Nottingham NG1 3AL
Walk-in service: 9am-5pm, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; 2-7pm, Wednesday; 9am-4.30pm, Friday
t: 0115 947 5414

NHS Direct

Offers medical advice and health information.
t: 111 (freephone). Please note that you may not be able to dial this number from a University telephone.
Available: 24 hours, 365 days a year
w: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Walk-in Centre

Nurse-led centre offering health information and advice and treatment for minor illnesses and injuries.

Location: 79a Upper Parliament Street, Nottingham, NG1 6LD
Open: 8am-8pm, 365 days a year

Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

Telephone information and helpline.
Available: 7-9.30pm, Monday to Friday
t: 0115 934 8485
text: 07624 809 360
w: www.nottslgs.org.uk

Rape Crisis Centre

Telephone helpline.
Available: 2-8pm, Monday and Tuesday; 10am-1pm, Thursday, Friday, Saturday; closed Wednesday
t: 0115 941 0440
w: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Samaritans

National helpline.
Available: 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
t: 08457 909 090
e: jo@samaritans.org.uk
w: www.samaritans.org.uk

Appendix 3: University policy on the release of personal information on present and former students of the University

Details of the policy can also be found online:
www.nottingham.ac.uk/go/info-release

Policy

1. The University respects the right to privacy of its present and former students, and will take all reasonable steps to protect personal information given to it by students.

2. It is expected that anyone maintaining on computer any lists or other databases about individual students will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Confidentiality of private and personal information

1. University staff must treat as confidential all information of a private or personal nature about an individual which they may learn in the course of their duties, and must not communicate this to other persons or bodies, except as indicated below.

2. This restriction includes any information about any present or former student, including their permanent and local addresses and telephone number, which they themselves have provided to the University for a particular purpose (eg registration for their course).

Acceptable reasons for disclosure

1. This rule of confidentiality does not apply if disclosure is required by law, or for the purpose of University business, or with the consent of the individual concerned.

Information which may be released

1. Information about the qualifications which have been awarded to individual students (ie name and subject of award, class of degree if appropriate, and date of award) is not confidential, and may be released.

2. It is permissible to indicate to enquirers whether or not the individual who is the subject of the enquiry is or has been a student, although oral requests from agencies such as High Commissions and Embassies should be dealt with by asking for

the request to be put in writing to the Academic Services Division (for forward transmission if the administration of the student's record is handled by another office within the University).

3. In exceptional or urgent cases, the caller should be put through to the Head of Student Administration, Academic Services Division.

Dealing with enquiries

1. Even where disclosure of information is permitted, reasonable steps must be taken to determine the authenticity of the enquiry before any information is disclosed.

2. Except as indicated below, any enquiry from an outside person or body (and this includes enquiries from present or former students, and persons who are or claim to be family members) should be answered with an offer to forward a letter to the person concerned, if in fact they are a present or former student. If the enquiry involves the location of numbers of individuals, it is permissible to tell the enquirer that a reasonable charge will be made to cover administrative costs.

Giving information to the police

1. While the University would appear to be within its legal rights to refuse to disclose information to the police unless the person concerned is suspected of committing an arrestable offence, the University's policy is to offer every reasonable assistance to the police in their enquiries.

2. Steps should be taken to establish the authenticity of a police request by, for example, asking the caller to leave name, rank, and station telephone number, and then phoning back and asking for the officer in question.

In case of doubt

1. In case of doubt about how to deal with a particular enquiry it should be passed to the Head of Student Administration or, in the case of former students, the Alumni Relations Office.

Appendix 4: University policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Any staff member who suspects that a young or vulnerable person has been, or is at risk of, being abused; or has a disclosure of abuse made to them; or receives a complaint relating to safeguarding issues at the University – either from within the University or an external agency – must report the matter to the Lead Safeguarding Officer for the University without delay either directly or through their line manager.

**Lead Safeguarding Officer –
Director of Student Operations and Support**
t: 0115 951 5758; internal extension 15758
e: stephen.dudderidge@nottingham.ac.uk
w: www.nottingham.ac.uk/registrar/documents/child-vulnerable-adult-protection-policy-april-2009-1.pdf

This guide is available in alternative formats.
Please contact the University Counselling Service.
t: 0115 951 3695
e: counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk

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