

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Strategy Relating to the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Students – Appendix 3

GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO STUDENTS WITH NON-EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

(for use by students and staff)

Please be aware of your own limitations and only work within the boundaries of your own competence and experience. If you are in any doubt, seek advice as detailed below.

If you have concerns about the student's behaviour, but there is no immediate risk to the student or others, please follow this guide.

The student may be:

- depressed, anxious, generally stressed
- homesick, lonely and isolated
- having problems with relationships
- suffering with low self esteem
- bereaved
- having unexplained study or money problems
- behaving out of character

What you can do:

- Listen and give the student time to talk
- Provide reassurance
- Be calm, offer empathy and support
- Be sympathetic, not dismissive
- Try to understand the situation from the student's point of view
- Do not become personally over-invested or over-involved: remember your professional status and relationship to the student
- Do not promise anything that you can't deliver, e.g. total confidentiality: while you can of course treat information sensitively, there may be a duty or need for you to pass on some portion of what a student says to Student Services
- **Seek assistance** – *you are not expected to be able to handle difficult situations alone and without guidance, and nor should you attempt to do so. If in doubt at any point, contact the ASC (01334 462020, theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk) who will advise you*

After providing support:

Consider reflectively reviewing the situation by talking the situation through with your line manager, or Student Services.

Remember to consider the effect on yourself. Providing support to others can be rewarding, but can also affect you negatively. For example:

- Your concerns may make you feel uncomfortable
- Your own health is affected negatively
- Your work is suffering

If this is the case for you, contact the ASC, or if you are a staff member, you can also contact Human Resources/Occupational Health.

Only in very limited and extreme circumstances, and when other agencies such as the police or NHS have been unable to contact the nominated emergency contact, when it is believed that a student may be in very serious danger, will the University contact a student's emergency contact. Emergency contacts are nominated by the student at the time of matriculation and students are asked to ensure they be kept up to date. The record can be amended by the student at any time. N.B. Emergency contacts are not always the Next of Kin.