

Student Mental health

A GUIDE FOR STAFF



All Universities are seeing an increase in both the amount and severity of mental health problems that students present with (see #stepchange, Universities UK report). The aim of this guide is to provide staff with some general information on how to support students with mental health difficulties. You are not expected to be an expert. For more information or guidance read the Mental Health Policy or contact Student Wellbeing.

What's the University doing about this?

The University fully endorses the 'stepchange' approach. Mental health matters. It affects our relationships and our wellbeing. It determines how we learn, and our productivity. The University is adopting mental health as a strategic priority, implementing a whole university approach, with students and staff involved at all stages of the journey.

Key actions to date:

- + Developing our strategy and action plans globally with our student union
- + Challenging stigma through the Black Dog campaign
- + Focusing on health promotion with campaigns and events for Diversity month and special projects such as Malaysia Campus 'happiness project'
- + Developing resilience through student wellbeing activities
- + Building capacity by running training events on mental health awareness and suicide prevention for all staff including Personal Tutors
- + Investing in frontline services- a new Mental Health Advisor post and additional Student Counsellor
- + Investing in digital support 24/7 – all students and staff across the global campuses can now access the Big White Wall

Causes of Mental health difficulties

Anyone can have a mental health problem. Mental health difficulties can be triggered by many factors. Stress, life events, past experiences and genetics all play a part in determining our mental health. Student life exposes individuals to risk factors affecting mental health including financial worries, periods of transition, substance use, parental pressure, culture shock and disconnection from previous supports. People with past problems are likely to struggle more.

What to look out for

There are a number of signs to look out for, and whilst they don't necessarily mean that a student is experiencing mental ill-health, these may be early signals:

- + Low attendance at classes
- + Failure to submit work
- + Lower grades than expected
- + Withdrawing from the social group
- + Less interactive at tutorials than previously
- + Changes in behaviour
- + Tearfulness
- + Physical signs such as cuts to wrists or low energy
- + Bizarre behaviour or thoughts in conversation or in emails
- + Low or very high mood
- + Signs of excessive alcohol or drug use
- + Excessive anxiety e.g. not responding to reassurance

The time of the year can also be significant. Periods of transition at the beginning and end of a year can be stressful.

Suicidal thoughts

Risk factors for suicide are complex. They include predisposing factors such as a history of depression or hopelessness; vulnerability factors such as poor problem-solving skills or impulsivity; and trigger factors, such as stress or loss. The reasons why people become suicidal are a complex mix of personal and social factors. If a student says that they are feeling suicidal you should take this seriously. Explain to them that you are concerned for their safety, encourage them to get help and support them to do so. Tell them that they will need to see a professional in the University (see contacts for each campus). Don't promise confidentiality as this cannot be guaranteed if there is a serious risk of harm to the student.

You may feel out of your depth in trying to help the student but there are people in the University who are trained to help, so it is important that you put the student in touch with someone who is qualified and able to help them immediately.

Helping a student

The most effective way to help a student is to keep in regular contact with them and refer them to Student Wellbeing. Not all students will want this, so in these cases, we will support the staff member in helping the student. However, it is important to keep Student Wellbeing informed of any concerns as this is the only way we can monitor situations and make an assessment about the risk of deterioration in their mental state. We often have a lot of information about students which can help make sense of behaviours.

When there are serious concerns about a student, we may convene a case conference, involving the student, key staff and relevant health professionals who are known to the student, so that we can agree a way forward that is in the student's best interest. A student is always consulted before arranging a case conference and is usually involved in the discussion (unless they aren't well enough to attend).

Remember that you are not solely responsible for a student's mental health: contact any person listed for advice.

Contact

DUBAI CAMPUS

Student Advisor, Dubai

StudentadvisorDubai@hw.ac.uk

+971 4 435 8796

Out of office hours contact the main campus reception on

+971 4435 8700

SCOTTISH CAMPUSES

Student Wellbeing Centre,

0131 451 3386

studentwellbeing@hw.ac.uk

Carol Murray

Head of Student Counselling and Support

C.J.Murray@hw.ac.uk

0131 451 3387

Christine Johnston

Director of Student Wellbeing

C.Johnston@hw.ac.uk

0131 451 4505

Michael Sylvester

Mental Health Advisor

M.Sylvester@hw.ac.uk

0131 451 3386

OUT OF HOURS

Edinburgh Campus:

Edinburgh Crisis Centre 0808 801 0414

NHS Mental Health Assessment Services Edinburgh

24 hours 0131 286 8127

Borders Campus:

NHS 24 call 111

Borders Crisis team 01896 827321

Orkney Campus:

NHS 24 call 111

MALAYSIA CAMPUS

Ming Fai Yap Assistant Manager, Counselling and Support

m.yap@hw.ac.uk +603 8894 3614

Sharifah Mastura Senior Manager, Student Support Services

s.b.syed_mohamed@hw.ac.uk +603 8894 3601

Nicholas Ong Head of Registry and Student Services

m.yap@hw.ac.uk +603 8894 3611

OUT OF HOURS

HWUM Security Office +603 8894 3935

OTHER HELP LINES/INFORMATION

The Samaritans call 116 123

Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87 www.breathingspace.scot

Scottish Association for Mental Health <https://www.samh.org.uk>
