

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WEST of SCOTLAND

UWS

# Procedures for Supporting Students in Distress



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[Procedures for Supporting Students in Distress](https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/policies-procedures-guidance/) can be viewed on the university website.  
(<https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/policies-procedures-guidance/>)

# Section 1: Introduction & summary flowcharts

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The mental health and wellbeing of our university community is everyone's concern. UWS has adopted a **whole university approach** to supporting the mental wellbeing of staff and students, underpinned by guidance from Universities UK.<sup>1</sup> Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan outlines current priorities.<sup>2</sup> The University has also collaborated with the Students' Union to create a Student Mental Health Agreement, in line with the NUS Think Positive initiative.

In terms of student mental wellbeing, most students will cope well with the challenges of academic life, with support and guidance from their friends, family and academic staff (including Aspire Advisors). However, on occasion, some students may need more than this. The guidance in this document therefore offers **clear, concise information and advice** to all members of staff on how to support students in varying degrees of distress. It should enable you to:

- **Recognise when a student might be in difficulty**
- **Make an effective initial response** (in line with the University's duty of care<sup>3</sup>)
- **Signpost a student on to appropriate support services**

## Is it urgent or non-urgent?

You are not expected to be an 'expert' in mental health, or to take prime responsibility for a student's mental health difficulties. Instead, the guidance is designed to help you respond with compassion, and make a **common-sense judgement** based on certain criteria as to whether a student's situation is '**urgent**' or '**non-urgent**'. The advice on how to respond varies accordingly. It is important to be prepared for urgent situations, but you should be aware they occur very rarely, and that expert help is available.

In all cases, **early intervention** not only supports student mental wellbeing but also ensures that any issues relating to a student's academic progress and retention are addressed as soon as possible.

The guidance also includes advice on maintaining appropriate **boundaries** when supporting students in distress.

A brief guide to mental health and mental health difficulties can be found in **Appendix 1** (page 20).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/stepchange-mentally-healthy-universities>  
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/features/suicide-safer-universities>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/8141/mental-health-and-wellbeing-plan-2021-2024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The University has a general Duty of Care in common law to deliver its educational and pastoral services to the standard of the ordinarily competent institution, and in carrying out its services and functions, to act reasonably to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students. It has a duty under Health & Safety legislation to do everything reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of its students. The University also has a duty under Equalities legislation to promote the equality of disabled people. This includes students with mental health difficulties.

## Confidentiality

When supporting a student in distress, it is important to bear confidentiality in mind. Reassure the student that any information they give will be treated with respect. Information about the student should only be shared with UWS staff and external personnel who need to be directly involved in responding to the situation. In principle, it is best to consult with a student whenever possible about such information-sharing, and to reach agreement about an appropriate course of action.

Exceptionally, there may be some 'urgent' situations where there isn't time to gain explicit consent, or where a student may disagree with the proposed course of action. If there is an immediate risk to life and/or injury to the student or others, it may be wisest to act in the absence of consent, and to address any outstanding issues once the immediate situation has been dealt with. (See **Appendix 2** on page 21).

The remainder of this section contains **two summary flowcharts and a list of student support services**:

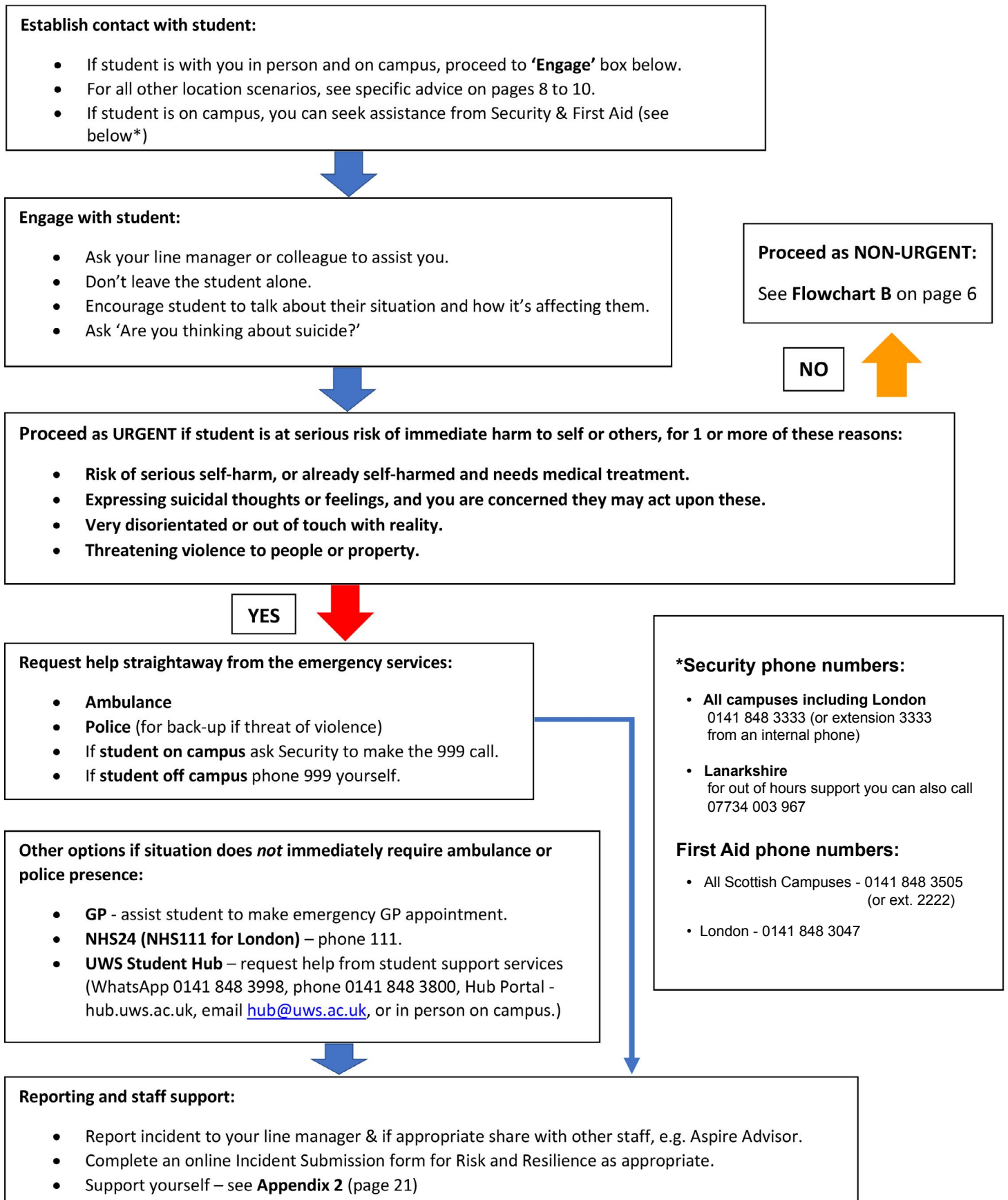
- **Flowchart A** (page 5) should enable you assess whether a student's situation is **urgent** and provides advice on the **immediate steps** you should take.
- **Flowchart B** (page 6) relates to **non-urgent** situations and offers advice on the **prompt steps** you should take to help a student identify their support needs. There may be support you can reasonably offer, and/or you may need to signpost the student on to student support services.
- **The List** (page 7) also relates to non-urgent situations and outlines the range of **student support services** you can signpost students on to.

After the flowcharts and list, you can find **fuller advice** in **Section 2** (responding to **urgent** situations) and **Section 3** (responding to **non-urgent** situations).

**Section 4** covers the specific procedure for a student wellbeing suspension.

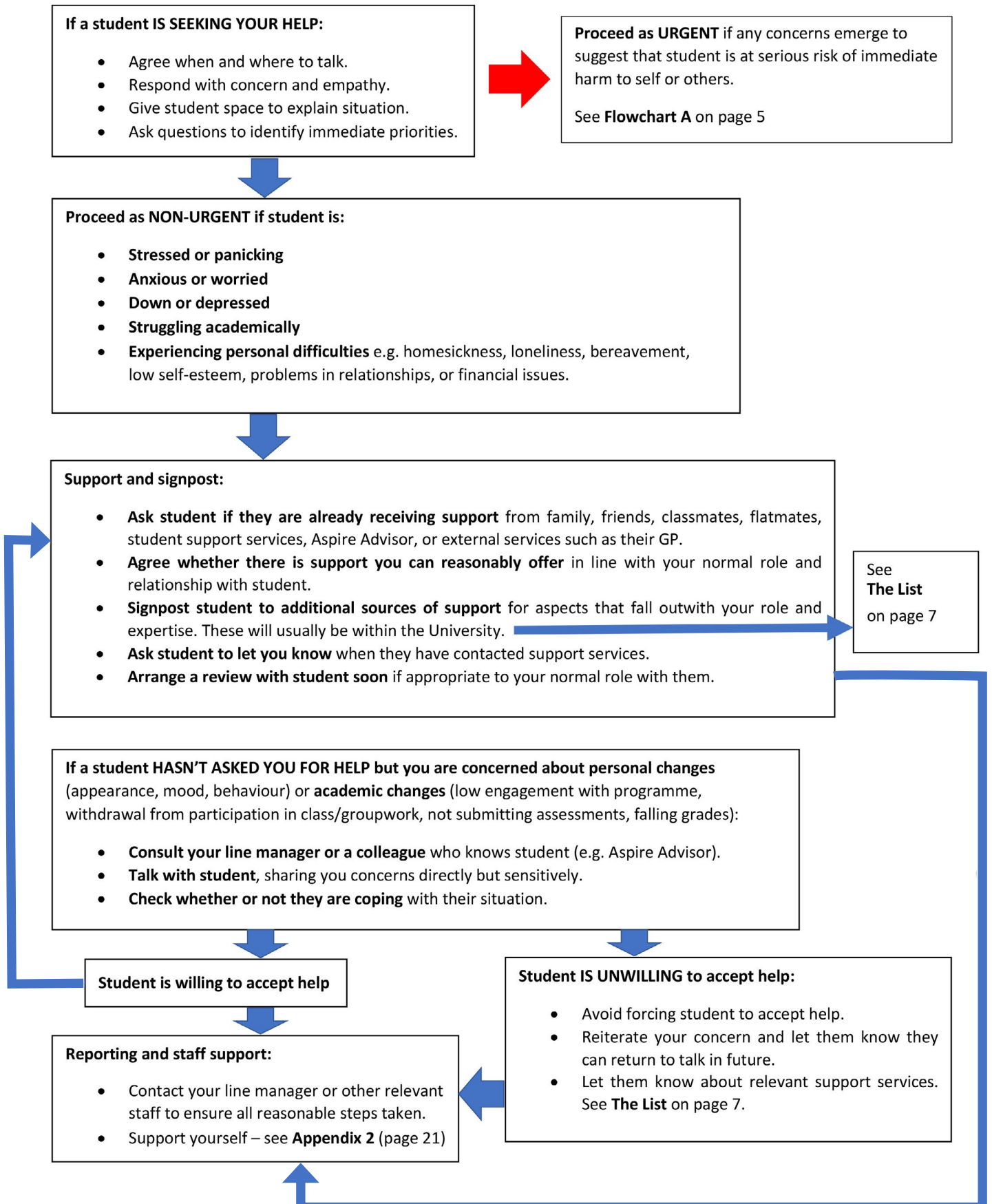
# Flowchart A: urgent situations

See Section 2 for further information (page 8)



## Flowchart B: non-urgent situations

See Section 3 for further information (page 14)



## List of student support services

Like Flowchart B, the List below relates to 'non-urgent' situations. It should enable you to **signpost a student on to specific student support services**. (For external services, see **Appendix 3** on page 22.)

The **Student Hub** is the first point of contact for students with questions or support needs. The Hub can provide information about all the services marked with an asterisk below\*. Hub staff can also make appointments for students. (Academic Skills and Careers appointments can be made directly online.) Students can also get help with Finance payments, and with Registry enquiries.

**Student Hub contact details: WhatsApp: 0141 848 3998, telephone: 0141 848 3800, Hub Portal: [hub.uws.ac.uk](http://hub.uws.ac.uk), email: [hub@uws.ac.uk](mailto:hub@uws.ac.uk), or in person on each campus.**

### Counselling & Wellbeing Team\*

Student has personal difficulties such as homesickness, loneliness, bereavement, low self-esteem, relationships. They may be experiencing stress, panic, anxiety, worry, low mood or depression.

### Out of Hours Student Helpline 0800 028 3766

Free and confidential helpline for all UWS students, including access to a counsellor (evenings and weekends).

### International Student Support Team\*

International student Visa issues, bringing dependants to UK, working during or after studies, and other welfare issues.

### Disability Team\*

Student has a disability, longstanding health condition (including mental health conditions like anxiety or depression) or specific learning disability like dyslexia.

### Funding & Advice Team\*

Advice about statutory funding like SAAS, trusts & scholarships, entitlement to benefits, childcare & discretionary funding, money management.

### Academic Skills Team\*

Advice on time management, note-taking, exam revision, presentations, dissertations.

### Careers Team\*

Career planning, employability, job searching, CV's, applications & interviews.

### Multifaith Chaplaincy Team\*

Personal support & spaces for reflection available on all campuses.

### Student Success Team\*

Support for students who're not engaging in their programme / at risk of dropping out.

**Schools** – Relevant contact for academic and pastoral support, including interruption of study, e.g. Lecturer, Aspire Advisor, Personal Tutor, Education Guidance Advisor, Research Supervisor, Programme Leader or Year Leader.

**Accommodation Support** re. UWS residences

### Report + Support

Gender-based violence, bullying & harassment, discrimination, hate crime & racism.

### Students' Union Advice Team

Fitness to practice, plagiarism, appeals, complaints and hardship fund.

# Section 2: Responding to urgent situations

## When is it urgent?

If a student is at **serious risk of immediate harm to self or others**, the situation should be regarded as **urgent**. This may be for one or more of the following reasons:

- The student is at risk of **serious self-harm** (or has already self-harmed to the extent of requiring medical treatment).
- The student **expresses suicidal thoughts or feelings**, and you are concerned they may act upon these.
- The student seems **very disorientated or out of touch with reality**.
- The student is **threatening violence to people or property**.

## Action to be taken:

Urgent situations require immediate attention so that the student is **referred on to NHS and other emergency services** for appropriate mental health support. Urgent situations happen rarely in practice but responding to them can be challenging and anxiety-provoking. They require decisive action and may 'stretch' many of us beyond the usual day-to-day activities associated with our individual roles.

The guidance that follows should enable you to confirm that the situation is urgent, and make an effective response:

## 1. Establishing contact

Your concern for a student may arise when a student is actually **with you in person and on campus**. However, with the development of **hybrid learning and teaching**, this may not be the case. Please establish contact as follows:

### a. You and the student are both on campus but not in the same location

– ask for the student's location and contact details (especially mobile number) and provided it is safe to do so, proceed to their location. Ask your line manager or another colleague to accompany you to help assess the situation and take your mobile phone so that you can easily contact Security and/or a First Aider.

If you are too far away to be able to respond quickly, or if no colleagues are readily available, or you don't think it is safe for you to be at the student's location, contact Security for assistance:

**Security staff** can be contacted as follows:

- **All campuses including London** – 0141 848 3333 (or extension 3333 from an internal phone)
- **Lanarkshire** – for out of hours support you can also call 07734 003 967



**First Aid** assistance can be requested as follows:

- **All Scottish Campuses** – 0141 848 3505 (or extension 2222 from an internal phone)
- **London** – call campus reception 0141 848 3047

**SafeZone app:** you can also use the app on all campuses, including London. If you press the Emergency, First Aid or Help button, the app will put you in touch with the most appropriate member of staff.

(N.B. If you are *off* campus, the app will offer you a single-tap 999 call to UK emergency services.)

**b. You are off campus while the student is on campus** – ask the student for their location and contact details (especially mobile number). Then contact Security straightaway to ask them to go to the student's location. Give Security your contact details so you can decide together on the action to be taken. You are not expected to travel to campus to be with the student.

**c. You are on campus but the student is off campus** – ask the student for their location and contact details (especially mobile number). Do not proceed to their location. Advise them to stay where they are, provided it is a safe place. If it isn't a safe place, ask whether they are either able to meet you on campus, or whether they can go to a nearby safe location. Tell the student that you are going to contact the appropriate emergency services to request that they go to the student's location. Offer to stay in touch with the student until help arrives. You can also ask whether there is someone they know who could come and stay with them while they are waiting.

(Please note that UWS Security and First Aiders are not expected to respond to situations that arise off campus.)

**d. You and the student are both off campus** – same advice as for scenario c. You are not expected to go to their location or to campus.

**e. Methods of communication** – be aware that communication in person or by phone may not necessarily suit all students, so consider alternatives like online video or audio (Teams) or possibly email. Bear in mind that English is a second language for some students, while there will be students with a disability that has an impact on communication. Neurodiverse students in particular can find communication difficult, so use clear and unambiguous language in all communication. British Sign Language users can access [ContactScotlandBSL](#), the online BSL interpreting video relay service.

**f. You have been contacted by a third party** – if you have been contacted by someone who is concerned about a student, for example another student or a family member, the priority is to quickly establish whether it meets the criteria for treating it as an urgent situation.<sup>4</sup> If it does, you then need to decide who is best placed to take the appropriate action outlined in the rest of this section.

<sup>4</sup> If you judge that it is a 'non-urgent' situation, the advice in **Section 3** covers situations where you are contacted by a third party.

If the third party is physically with the student, it probably makes sense for them rather than you to contact the emergency services, as they are best placed to give information or answer questions. If, for any reason, the third party does not feel able to take action, let them know that you have a duty of care towards the student and that you will take action accordingly. In such circumstances, you may wish to quickly consult your line manager or another colleague to check your plans.

**g. Global Opportunities Programme** – if the student is a UK student currently studying abroad as part of the Global Opportunities Programme, please contact the Global Opportunities Co-ordinator in the relevant School. The Co-ordinator should then contact the host institution/enterprise to arrange appropriate local support for the student.

**h. When you are not at work** – the advice on establishing contact applies only during your normal working hours, which may be daytime or evening depending on your role. Please note that you are not expected to respond to students outwith your working hours. In order to maintain appropriate boundaries, you should avoid giving students your personal mobile phone number or email address.

It is also good practice to include information in your out-of-office reply and email signature about the UWS Out of Hours Student Support Helpline (see **List of student support services** on page 7) plus external sources of 24/7 support (see **Appendix 3** on page 22).



## 2. Engaging with the student

In urgent situations, and especially when there is the risk of suicide, it can feel challenging to know what to say and how to say it. However, engaging with a very distressed student can help them feel safe and reduce their sense of isolation or hopelessness. And simply staying with them helps to 'hold' the situation until the emergency services arrive.

### Key points:

- a. **Ask your line manager or another colleague to help you respond.** Try to stay calm. Act proportionately.
- b. **Don't leave the student alone.** Engage with the student if possible but **put safety first**. If the student is on campus, you can request help from Security and/or a First Aider as required (see contact details on pages 8 & 9).
- c. **Encourage the student to talk with you about their situation and how it's affecting them.** Some students may find it challenging to discuss their distress, especially if they are concerned about being stigmatised or it's the first time they've talked. Respond with concern and warmth. Be willing to listen without judgement and avoid giving superficial responses. This should enable you to confirm whether the situation is urgent.
- d. Be mindful that a minority of individuals **may not appreciate the seriousness** of the situation or want to co-operate with those who are trying to help. In these instances, it is particularly important to ask a colleague and/or Security and First Aiders for assistance. You then have back-up for explaining to the student the seriousness of the situation, and why it is important for you to take action.
- e. In certain circumstances, it might also be appropriate to contact the student's **named emergency contact person**. This should only be done following consultation with the student and wherever possible with the student's consent. Depending on the situation, the student may prefer someone other than their named person to be contacted. This process should only be carried out by the Dean in the student's School and Head of Student Services (or their deputies), with assistance from Registry.
- f. **Suicide attempts can be prevented by asking someone directly** whether they have suicidal thoughts, feelings or intentions. It is a common misconception that asking about suicide increases the risk that someone will make an attempt. Ask now 'Are you thinking about suicide?' and take action if a student has been planning an attempt, has acquired the means to do so, and you think they may act on their intentions.
- g. In many cases, though, someone who has suicidal thoughts or feelings will be clear that they *don't* intend to make a suicide attempt. Talking with them will often reveal that they are feeling **overwhelmed** by their circumstances and **struggling to see a way forward**, rather than having an explicit wish to die. It is also common for someone to say that they would never make an attempt because of the impact this would have on their family or friends, so it's important to check for **'protective factors'** like this.

### 3. Assistance from the NHS and other emergency services

#### Key points:

- a. If you judge the student to be at **serious risk of immediate harm to self or others**, **seek help straightaway from the emergency services**, as follows:
- **NHS ambulance** – the student should be taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital so that their medical needs can be assessed by the appropriate staff in Accident & Emergency:
    - If the **student is on campus**, please **contact Security and ask them to phone 999 for an ambulance**. Give Security staff a summary of the situation along with the student's location and contact details. Security staff are best placed to help emergency personnel navigate on to campus.
    - If the student is **off campus**, please **phone 999 yourself** and ask for an ambulance to go to the student's location.
    - While you are waiting for an ambulance to arrive, **stay in contact with the student, offering reassurance**, unless you feel your own or others' safety is compromised.
  - **Police** – you can also request back-up from the police if the student is threatening violence to people or property. If the student is on campus, ask Security to call the police – otherwise, phone 999 yourself. Ambulance crews can also ask the police to provide back-up while dealing with an incident like this.
- b. **GP practice & NHS24** – if you judge that the situation does not immediately require an ambulance or police presence, and if the student is willing and able to co-operate, you should assist the student to request an **emergency appointment with their GP**. The student's GP can refer onto other NHS services as appropriate.<sup>5</sup>
- If the student's GP practice is closed, or unable to assist at short notice, you should assist the student to **contact NHS24 on 111**. Anyone calling NHS24 in mental health distress will be able to speak with a member of staff in the service's Mental Health Hub, so that their needs can be assessed. This is available 24/7.<sup>6</sup>
- c. **Transport** – as a member of staff, you are not expected to provide transport for a student who needs help from the NHS or other emergency services. (If, however, the 999 call handler has told you there will be a considerable wait time, please consult your line manager as to how best to proceed.)

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<sup>5</sup> If a student has not yet registered with a local GP, e.g. because they are a newly arrived International student, you can support them to call the **UWS Student Support Helpline on 0800 028 3766**. The student will be able to talk with a Counsellor, who will conduct a risk assessment, and if necessary link them in with statutory services. This is available 24/7.

<sup>6</sup> For London Campus, contact **NHS111** on 111.

## 4. Assistance from the Student Hub and Student Services

If you judge that the situation does *not* immediately require an ambulance or police presence, and you think the student would benefit from speaking with a UWS Counsellor or Advisor in Student Services as soon as possible, please contact the [Student Hub](#). Hub staff will then contact an appropriate member of staff, who will make a plan to talk with the student. You can also ask the Hub to put you in touch with a member of staff if you need advice on how to respond to a student's situation.

You can **contact the Student Hub** as follows:

- WhatsApp - 0141 848 3998
- Phone - 0141 848 3800 (phone lines are open Monday to Friday 10.00 - 15.00)
- Hub Portal - [hub.uws.ac.uk](http://hub.uws.ac.uk)
- Email [hub@uws.ac.uk](mailto:hub@uws.ac.uk)
- In person, on campus

(You can find further information about student support services on page 7)

## 5. Reporting

Report the incident to your line manager. They should then consider whether it is appropriate to forward information about the incident to other members of staff (e.g. the student's Aspire Advisor). Consideration should also be given as to whether it is appropriate for the student to be contacted by a member of staff after the immediate situation has been dealt with, and who that should be. Care should be exercised in relation to confidentiality (see page 4).

In certain circumstances, you should also complete an online [Incident Submission form for Risk and Resilience](#).<sup>7</sup> Where possible, please name the student/s involved in the incident, so that Risk and Resilience can follow up if appropriate. (If the student/s would prefer not to be identified, Risk and Resilience will still accept your form on that basis.)

## 6. Support for you

Having dealt with the immediate situation, you are welcome to make contact with any of the services listed in **Appendix 2** (page 21). Taking a little time for debriefing and reflection can help in various ways. It can provide reassurance that you have taken appropriate action and can address any outstanding issues. It can also help you 'stand down' from responding to the urgent situation, so that you can get on with your everyday roles in work and at home.

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<sup>7</sup> There are 2 different forms, one for reporting an accident (including injury) and the other for reporting a near miss.

# Section 3: Responding to non-urgent situations

## When is it NOT urgent?

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

- **Stressed or panicking**
- **Anxious or worried**
- **Down or depressed**
- **Struggling academically**
- **Experiencing personal difficulties** such as homesickness, loneliness, bereavement, low self-esteem, problems in relationships.

Many of us will have experience of being concerned about students who are distressed due to adverse personal circumstances or academic difficulties. Early intervention is crucial for supporting a student's mental wellbeing, as well as their academic performance, progression and retention. We all have a role to play in taking **prompt steps** to ensure that students' needs are adequately addressed by the appropriate sources of support.

Sometimes, it can be difficult to judge whether a situation is 'urgent' or 'non-urgent', especially if a student has suicidal thoughts or feelings. You might therefore find it useful to refer to Section 2 to see whether it meets any of the criteria for treating it as an 'urgent' situation. If not, proceed with treating it as a '**non-urgent**' situation.

## Action to be taken:

The process for dealing with 'non-urgent' situations is to **check promptly with the student whether they are already accessing appropriate support with their difficulties, and if not, signposting them to relevant sources of support, usually within the University.**

The priorities are to ensure that:

- The student receives **relevant support from you**, in line with your normal role and relationship with them, for example if you are their Lecturer, Aspire Advisor, Personal Tutor, Education Guidance Advisor, Research Supervisor, Programme Leader or Year Leader.
- The student is **signposted on to other appropriate sources of support**, usually within the University, for matters that fall outwith your remit.
- **Any third party** who is concerned about the student (e.g. a friend, classmate, or flatmate) has been reassured that the matter is being addressed.

The rest of this section outlines the steps you can take to ensure that a student receives timely and appropriate support.

# 1. If a student seeks your help with a problem

## Steps you can take:

- a. **Time to talk** – come to an agreement about when you can talk with the student. You might be able to talk straight away, or you may need to arrange a time in the near future. Agree whether to meet in person on campus, or by Teams or phone. Ensure you can talk in private, without interruptions, and clearly define how long you are available for.
- b. **Methods of communication** – be aware that communication in person or by phone may not necessarily suit all students, so consider alternatives like online video or audio (Teams) or possibly email. Bear in mind that English is a second language for some students, while there will be students with a disability that has an impact on communication. Neurodiverse students in particular can find communication difficult, so use clear and unambiguous language in all communication. British Sign Language users can access [ContactScotlandBSL](#), the online BSL interpreting video relay service.
- c. **Tone of response** – try to respond in a concerned, non-judgemental and empathic way to their situation and the distress it is causing them. Be aware that some students may find it challenging to discuss their distress, especially if they are concerned about being stigmatised or it's the first time they've talked.
- d. **Give space** – give the student a bit of space to explain their situation. Ask questions that help clarify what is going on, how it is affecting them, and what the immediate priorities are.
- e. **Avoid rushing in** to 'fix' problems. (If, however, in the course of the discussion, urgent issues emerge, please refer back to **Section 2**).
- f. **Existing support** – check whether they are already receiving support from family, friends, classmates, flatmates, University services, Aspire Advisor, or external services such as their GP.
- g. **Support from you** – agree whether there is support that you can reasonably offer, in line with your normal role and relationship with the student. (Depending on the student's situation, it might be appropriate to consult your line manager before reaching an agreement with the student.)
- h. **Signpost to additional support** – for aspects of support that fall outwith your role and expertise, signpost the student on to other appropriate sources of support, usually within the University.

See **the List** on page 7 for further information on **student support services**, including the **Counselling & Wellbeing Team**. If you aren't sure which services are most appropriate, you are welcome to **contact the Student Hub** to ask for advice. You can also suggest to the student that they contact the Hub directly, as Hub staff can give practical advice and also make appointments for many of the support services.

You can **contact the Student Hub** as follows:

- WhatsApp – 0141 848 3998
- Phone – 0141 848 3800 (phone lines are open Monday to Friday 10.00 – 15.00)
- Hub Portal – [hub.uws.ac.uk](http://hub.uws.ac.uk)
- Email – [hub@uws.ac.uk](mailto:hub@uws.ac.uk)
- In person, on campus

For information about **external support services**, including the NHS, national helplines, and self-help websites, see **Appendix 3** on page 22.

Ask the student whether they would be willing to let you know when they have made contact with support services. Emphasise that they do not need to divulge the details of that contact, but that it can simply be reassuring for you to know that they have followed up your advice.

- i. **Review** – arrange to contact the student again soon to review the situation, if this is appropriate to your normal role and relationship with them. Arranging a follow-up discussion demonstrates your genuine concern for the student and can be especially important if the situation is likely to take a bit of time to resolve. If you are giving support to a student longer-term, remember to look after yourself by remaining clear with the student about what you can realistically help them with and when you need to refer them on to other sources of support. Feed back any ongoing concerns to your line manager.
- j. **Training for you** – for additional information, you may find it useful to look at the [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust e-learning package](#). This is designed to give staff the skills, knowledge and confidence to offer initial support to students who may have mental health issues.

## 2. If a student hasn't asked you for help but you are concerned about them

If you have noticed significant changes in a student's appearance, or in their mood or behaviour, this could be an indication that they are struggling to cope with academic or personal issues, and that their emotional wellbeing is adversely affected. Alternatively, a third party (e.g. a friend, classmate or flatmate) may let you know that they are concerned about the student.

**Personal changes** to look out for include:

- **Appearance** (e.g. tired, rapidly losing or gaining weight, decline in personal hygiene).
- **Mood** (e.g. sad, down, depressed, anxious, worried, panicky, angry).
- **Behaviour** (e.g. unusually quiet or withdrawn, unable to focus or concentrate, irritable or argumentative, acting in an unpredictable or erratic way).

**Academic changes** to look out for include:

- Fall in engagement levels.
- Withdrawal from participation in class or in groupwork settings.
- Failure to submit assessments.
- Falling grades.



## Steps you can take:

- a. **Consult with your line manager or another colleague** who knows the student (e.g. their Aspire Advisor) to see if they also have cause for concern. (Please be discreet.)
- b. **Talk with the student** – share your concerns directly but sensitively with the student, e.g. 'I'm concerned about you, is something wrong?' Ask whether or not they are managing to cope with their situation.
- c. **Student willing to accept help** – if the student isn't coping well, and is willing to accept support, follow steps e. to i. on pages 15 to 16 in order to help the student tackle the situation.
- d. **Student unwilling to accept help** – occasionally, you may find that a student is unwilling to accept help or is unwilling to acknowledge that they may be experiencing difficulties. Try to avoid forcing a student to accept help. Gently reiterate your concern for them and let them know that they can return to talk with you at any point in the future.

Let them know about any relevant support services, including the **Counselling & Wellbeing Team** (see **List** on page 7).

You might also want to consult any of these services for further advice about supporting the student, especially if you have been monitoring the situation and think it may be worsening over time.

## 3. Reporting

When you are dealing with a 'non-urgent' situation, it is good practice to pass on information to your line manager or to other relevant staff (e.g. the student's Aspire Advisor) to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken. Please be discreet.

## 4. Support for you

Having dealt with the immediate situation, you are welcome to make contact with any of the services listed in **Appendix 2** on page 21. Taking a little time for debriefing and reflection can help in various ways. In cases where a student was willing to accept help, it can provide reassurance that you took appropriate action and can assist you in addressing any outstanding issues. If the student was unwilling to accept help, you may be left feeling concerned about them. In these instances, a debrief may help you to realise that you have done all that can reasonably be expected at the present time.

# Section 4: Suspension of a student

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UWS is committed to developing and embedding a culture of wellbeing among our staff and students. The university takes seriously its duty of care to all members of our community and seeks to maintain an environment that is conducive to teaching, learning and research. We welcome a diverse student body and aim to support all students through their studies. Unfortunately, though, there may be instances where a student's behaviour leads to concern for their mental wellbeing.

This may include behaviour that poses a direct risk to health and safety, or makes unreasonable support demands of other members of the University community. In all situations staff are encouraged to work collaboratively with the student, making them aware of university support services and options to interrupt their studies to benefit their wellbeing.

There may be occasions where a student seems unable, or unwilling, to adequately manage their health and wellbeing. The procedure in this section provides a student-centred framework to support a student of concern, and makes provision for proceeding without the consent of the student. This procedure should be followed when other interventions, i.e. student disciplinary or fitness to practice processes, are not the appropriate course of action due to the detrimental effect that they may have on the student's wellbeing.

In summary – the wellbeing suspension procedure is recommended when:

- **A student's mental health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others.**
- **The student's academic performance or personal conduct is not acceptable and is known to be, or suspected to be, the result of a mental health condition.**

## Stage 1 – offer support options

Schools and/or relevant departments will ensure that all supportive options are offered before the wellbeing suspension procedure is implemented. The student will be invited to discuss their concerns in a supportive manner and given the opportunity to explain their situation.

**Possible outcomes** of this discussion are:

- No follow-up action necessary.
- Referral to appropriate support service/s, e.g. GP, Counselling Service, Disability Service.
- Voluntary change in student status, e.g. interruption of studies or transfer to part-time study (with consideration of any financial/visa implications).
- The student's agreement to change their behaviour, with a review period stipulated. A review is then undertaken by the student's Aspire Advisor, Personal Tutor, Supervisor or student support staff member, etc.

The majority of cases can be resolved this way.

## Stage 2 – Wellbeing suspension meeting

This stage will be implemented if a student's unacceptable behaviour continues following a Stage 1 intervention. The Programme Leader or Head of Department should contact the Head of Student Services (or their nominee) who will convene a wellbeing suspension meeting. The student's teaching and student support staff should be in attendance. The student should not attend but will be informed that the meeting is taking place.

**Possible outcomes** of a wellbeing suspension meeting are:

- Continuation of studies (with or without adherence to an Action Plan)
- Suspension
- Withdrawal

Where a student is able to continue their studies (with or without action plan) the Head of Department (or their nominee) should be responsible for communicating the outcome of the wellbeing suspension meeting to the student.

### Wellbeing suspension

The decision to suspend a student would be made by the Vice-Principal Learning, Teaching and Students following a recommendation from the wellbeing suspension meeting. The student will be notified of the decision and advised of when the suspension will be reviewed. If relevant, medical evidence can be requested to ensure that the student is fit to resume their studies.

Where a student is living in university accommodation and their behaviour is negatively affecting other students' living and working conditions, the Residence manager, in consultation with a wellbeing suspension group, can require the student to move to alternative accommodation.

Where the student's next of kin/emergency contact is not able to be involved in the practical arrangements (e.g. to assist the student in making arrangements to return home) the Residential Life Team will endeavour to provide a reasonable level of support in carrying out these tasks.

### Wellbeing suspension review

A review will be arranged on a case-by-case basis and will take account of duty of care to the student and that of the whole university community.

**Possible outcomes include:**

- Continuation of the wellbeing suspension.
- Return to study plan is put in place, with clear requirements for engagement and conduct.
- Withdrawal – in the event of withdrawal, the student will be invited to meet with an appropriate academic staff member (normally Head of Department) who will communicate the decision, and this will be followed up in writing.

# Appendix 1: Brief guide to mental health & mental health difficulties

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In recent years, there has been much effort at national policy level to de-stigmatize mental health issues, and in particular to promote an awareness that mental health and physical health are equally important to our overall wellbeing.

The language around mental health issues is also changing – ‘mental health’ and ‘emotional wellbeing’ are often used interchangeably, while ‘mental health difficulties’ or ‘mental distress’ may be viewed as less stigmatising terms than ‘mental illness’ or ‘mental disorder’.

A key message is that many mental health difficulties are relatively common (e.g. anxiety and depression), and that in many cases recovery is eminently possible. Some mental health difficulties may endure but, with appropriate support and treatment, it is perfectly possible for someone to live a fulfilling life. The Mental Health Foundation offers a useful overview of current thinking <sup>8</sup>

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as:

‘A state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to realize their abilities, to learn well and work well, and to contribute to their communities. Mental health is an integral component of health and wellbeing and is more than the absence of mental disorder.’ <sup>9</sup>

By contrast, mental health difficulties can range from the worries and grief we all experience as part of everyday life, to the most bleak, suicidal depression, or complete loss of touch with everyday reality.

If you would like to learn more about student mental health issues, the signs to look out for and key helping skills, you can access the **Charlie Waller Memorial Trust e-learning package**. This consists of 6 sessions, each lasting 20 minutes.

You can also access the 20-minute **ZSA suicide awareness training course**.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/about-mental-health](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/about-mental-health)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_1) ‘World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All’ (2022)

# Appendix 2: Staff debriefing and support

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Having assisted a student in distress, you might appreciate the opportunity soon afterwards to have a short, confidential debrief with an appropriate person. This can be particularly useful if you found the incident stressful, if you had to take quick action to deal with an unfamiliar situation, or if you have leftover thoughts or feelings that you would like to reflect on.

You can seek support from the following sources within the University:

- Your **Line Manager**.
- The **Student Counselling and Wellbeing Team** – contact the Student Hub.  
**Hub contact details:** WhatsApp: 0141 848 3998, telephone: 0141 848 3800, Hub Portal: [hub.uws.ac.uk](http://hub.uws.ac.uk), email: [hub@uws.ac.uk](mailto:hub@uws.ac.uk), or in person on each campus.
- **Risk and Resilience**  
Contact details: [RiskandResilience@uws.ac.uk](mailto:RiskandResilience@uws.ac.uk), 0141 848 3181, Room B213, Richardson Building, Paisley Campus.
- **Occupational Health**  
Contact details: [Occupational.Health@uws.ac.uk](mailto:Occupational.Health@uws.ac.uk), 0141 848 3927.

You can also seek support, including confidential counselling, from the University's **Employee Assistance Programme**. This service is provided by an independent external organisation called 'Health Assured':

- There is a single sign-on desktop icon on all staff PC's.
- You can call the telephone helpline on 0800 028 0199 24 hours a day, any day of the year.
- There are also online support tools on the **Health Assured website**. (Go to **Employee Assistance Programme** for log-in details.)
- You can download the **Health Assured app** from Google Play or the App Store - when prompted, enter the employer code MHA008428.

# Appendix 3: External support services

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Here is a brief overview of **NHS services, national helplines and self-help websites** that you can signpost students to.

(For **student support services**, including the **Out of Hours Student Helpline**, please refer to **the List** on page 7.)

## 1. NHS Services

In addition to the direct support available from a student's **GP**, GP's can refer patients on to specialist **mental health services** within each Health Board area. GP's may also signpost students onto the UWS Counselling & Wellbeing Team, especially as appointments are often available relatively quickly.

Out of office hours, contact should be made with **NHS24 on 111**. If a caller to NHS24 says they are distressed or struggling with their mental health, they will be put straight through to a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner in the Mental Health Hub. Practitioners work alongside mental health nurses, and can refer callers on to support such as online programmes, short-term crisis intervention, or acute psychiatric admission. (For London campus, call NHS111 on 111.)

If a student is at **serious risk of immediate harm call 999**, rather than 111.

## 2. National helplines & self-help websites

If a student feels unsure about seeking face-to-face support, signposting them to national helplines and self-help websites can be a useful 'first step' to seeking help. While organisations such as the Samaritans and Breathing Space offer support to individuals in extreme distress, they are also available to anyone seeking support in relation to everyday mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression:

- **Samaritans** – phone 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org). Available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Breathing Space** – phone 0800 83 85 87. Available for free, Mondays to Thursdays 6pm – 2am, and at weekends from Fridays 6pm to Mondays 6am. Alternatively, you can use the webchat service. This is available Mondays to Fridays 6pm to 2am, and at weekends from 4pm to 12am. (This organisation serves Scotland only.)
- **Shout** – this crisis text helpline can be contacted 24/7 by sending a text to 85258.
- **SilverCloud** – All UWS students (and staff) can access SilverCloud. It is a free and confidential interactive resource, comprising several programmes on a range of topics. Users can explore practical strategies for tackling stress, anxiety, depression, body confidence and other issues.
- **Student Minds, Students Against Depression** and **NUS Think Positive** also offer guidance to students on a wide range of topics.
- **LGBT Health & Wellbeing** offers a wide range of support services & social events.

# Appendix 4: Document summary

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Procedure Author – Counsellor, Student Services

Procedure Owner – Vice-Principal - Learning, Teaching & Students

Parent Policy Statement – Student Experience Policy Statement

Public Access or Staff Only Access – Public

Version 6 – June 2023

Changes and Reason for Changes – The guidance on how to respond to both urgent and non-urgent situations is summarised in 2 flowcharts at the beginning of the document for easy reference, rather than one flowchart in an appendix. There is also an updated list of student support services. There is now a single phone number for contacting Security rather than different numbers for each campus. The advice takes account of the shift to hybrid learning and teaching, and the introduction of Aspire Advisors and the Student Success Team. Hyperlinks have been added throughout the document for easy reference to further information.

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06/2023