



Responding to
**Distressed
Students
Protocol**



Any member of the University community can **be a trusted person** for a student or may be well-positioned to spot when a student is in distress.

You may be the **first point of contact** for a student experiencing difficulty or you may come into contact with an obviously-distressed student who needs your help.

Recognise



Note the signs that the student may be experiencing some difficulty, e.g. erratic or aggressive behaviour, appearing ill, upset or fatigued, repeated absences (see page 6).

Engage



Don't avoid the situation. Engage with the student to let them know you have concerns about their wellbeing and would like to help.

Do



Help the student to initiate contact with appropriate support.

Taking action: Is there an immediate danger to the student or others?

No. The student is in some distress but can be supported through non-urgent channels.



Signpost to support for self referral

Signpost the student to supports available (see pages 9 & 10).

Access the relevant support service webpage with them before they leave so that the student engages with support.

If you or the student is unsure which service to access, the **Student Adviser** is best positioned to explore a student's issues and develop a support plan with

No, but they require fast-tracked, priority support.



Help the student to make an appointment for priority support

Students may already have established relationships with a UCD support service, or it may be clear which support is needed. In that case, help the student to **make an urgent appointment** via the contact details on page 09 or make a priority referral on their behalf. Where possible, stay with and accompany the student to the relevant support service if they can be seen immediately.

If you are unsure which support service is needed, contact a **Student Adviser or a Duty Manager** (01 716 7999, Estate Services) for guidance.

Yes, or I am unsure.



Call for emergency support

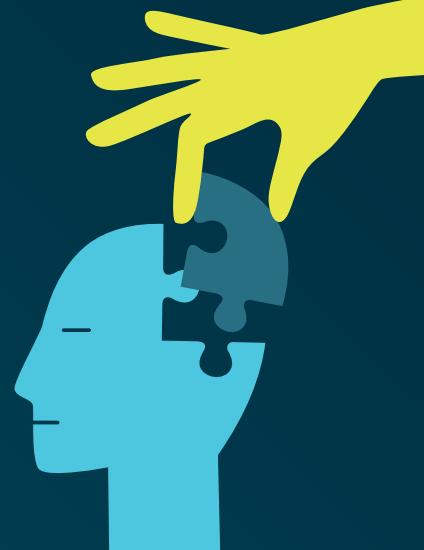
Call (01) 716 7999 (UCD Estate Services – Duty Manager)*

Stay with the student until assistance arrives.

Always ensure **your own safety**.

Consult with your manager or a colleague.

** Estate Services have qualified first responders who will attend the scene and co-ordinate the arrival of emergency services to campus.*



If you find after the incident that **you are affected**, staff should talk to their line manager or consider availing of support via the UCD Employee Assistance Service. Students should contact one of the support services listed on page 9.

Recognising signs of distress

This list is not exhaustive. If you feel there may be something wrong, **trust your instinct**.



Academic

- Unexpected change in academic performance, e.g. lower grades, unexplained absences from classes, loss of motivation for academic work or participation in class
- Essays or creative work that include disturbing content and/or themes of despair, hopelessness, suicide, violence, death, or aggression
- Multiple requests for extensions and/or extenuating circumstances



Physical

- Marked changes in physical appearance
- Appears to be physically unwell for a period of time
- Marked or noticeable change in mood or behaviour
- Appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of substances
- Other behaviour that doesn't seem to match the context/setting
- Signs of self harm, e.g. cuts/scars on arms and/or legs



Inter/Intrapersonal

- Direct comments about distress, feelings of overwhelm, family problems, etc.
- Signs/expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness, or shame
- Sudden changes in emotions, e.g. tearfulness, irritability, acute anxiety, expression of hopelessness about the future, exaggerated emotional responses
- Behaviour that is unusual or unpredictable
- Concern expressed by friends about a student
- Implied or direct threats of harm to self/others

Engaging with a student when you're concerned about their wellbeing

Say what you see & show you care

Say what you have noticed – avoid making assumptions or judgements. Let the student know that their wellbeing is important to you and that you want to help.

- "Hi _____, I just wanted to check in with you. I've noticed _____ and wanted to see if you'd like to talk."
- "Your wellbeing is important to me so I'd like to know how I can best support you at the moment."

Hear them out

Be there to listen. Listen patiently as you try to understand where they are coming from. Acknowledge their difficulty and instil hope that, with help, things can get better.

- "I'm sorry that you are going through this. Thank you for speaking to me about it. I know that can be hard." "It sounds like a very difficult situation. What has that been like for you?"

Know your role

Staff should be ready to be a supportive presence for a student, but are not expected to assume responsibilities outside the parameters of their role and should be aware of their personal limitations.

- "I can put you in touch with supports that we have in place specifically to help students who are experiencing the kind of thing you are describing."

Connect to help

Help the student connect to supports. The student is now engaged with a supportive network – arrange the next step in that engagement before the end of the conversation.

→ "I'd like to make sure that you are getting the kind of support you need. Could I make a call on your behalf now?/Could we look at setting up an appointment with someone now?"

On occasions, students may be reluctant to seek help. In such circumstances, it is best to advise the student of the services on offer and let them know that they may want to think it over and contact the service directly or come back to you for a referral.

→ "I understand that you may find it difficult to reach out to the supports that are available now. You might want to think over it and look at the website of the service to understand better what services they offer. All of the services remain open throughout the year, and you can come back to me or contact them directly or your Student Adviser can make a referral."

Check back in

Take an opportunity to check back in with the student.

→ "Good to see you again – how have you been getting on? I'm here for you if I can help with anything further."

UCD on-campus supports

In an emergency, **call (01) 716 7999.**

UCD Student Advisers

Offer assistance when personal, financial or social difficulties arise, including support with college life, advice on policies and procedures, referral to other UCD supports, and support with financial concerns.

Opening hours: Monday–Friday

9.30am–5pm

t. (01) 716 7120

w. www.ucd.ie/studentadvisers

UCD Student Counselling Service

Provides support when personal issues arise which affect happiness, wellbeing, capacity to cope, relationships or learning.

Opening hours: Monday–Friday

9:30am–1pm & 2pm–4:30pm

t. (01) 716 3159

w. www.ucd.ie/studentcounselling

UCD Student Health Service

Provides on-campus medical and psychiatric care, including where there is a concern for the health and wellbeing of a student.

Opening hours: Monday–Friday

9:30am–12pm & 2pm–4:00pm

t. (01) 716 3134

w. www.ucd.ie/stuhealth

UCD Chaplaincy

Provides pastoral care, emotional support and spiritual accompaniment for students of all faiths and none.

Opening hours: 24/7

t. (01) 716 1971

w. www.ucd.ie/chaplaincy

UCD Access and Lifelong Learning

Offers advice and supports to widen access and ensure participation by diverse student cohorts and supports students who require disability support, temporary exam accommodations, financial support, academic support and social support.

Opening hours: Monday–Friday

10am–4pm

t. (01) 716 7123

w. www.ucd.ie/all

Digital, telephone and out-of-hours supports and resources

Text About It (Spunout)

Text About It at 50808 provides a safe space where you're listened to by a trained Crisis Volunteer. You'll text back and forth, only sharing what you feel comfortable with.

Text 'HELLO' to 50808

Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

t. 116 123

e. jo@samaritans.ie

w. www.samaritans.org

Niteline

Niteline is an anonymous, confidential listening service providing information and support for UCD students on a 1-2-1 basis over the phone. The service is facilitated by trained student volunteers, supervised by qualified counsellors.

Opening hours: 9pm–2.30am

t. 1800 793 793

Edoc

Out-of-hours urgent medical care.

Opening hours: 6pm–8am,

Mon–Fri; open 24 hours at weekends

t. (01) 223 4500

HSE Mental Health Supports and Services

There are different types of support available for people with mental health difficulties. Many of the supports listed are provided by agencies with the support of the HSE. You can access most of the services without a referral.

w. hse.ie





For more information see
www.ucd.ie/secca/smhsp/distressedstudentsprotocol