

Supporting Students in Distress

KEY MESSAGES FOR FACULTY & STAFF

As students work to achieve their academic goals during a time of hybrid learning, they are also balancing multiple challenges and priorities all of which impact their capacity to learn and thrive. We all have a role to play in supporting student wellbeing. Opportunities to support all students' wellbeing can be embedded in your learning environment proactively - you can explore strategies for embedding wellbeing in your online and/or in person course design.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

CHALLENGES STUDENTS MAY BE EXPERIENCING

Students bring their unique selves and situations to any learning environment - in the classroom, and online. In addition to indicators identified in the Green Folder, students are likely to present with more challenges as we continue navigating hybrid teaching and learning.

ACADEMICS. They are worried about failing, completing the term, graduation requirements, and other specific course/program uncertainties. It will be difficult to concentrate, stay motivated, and focused. There are many factors that increase the challenges students will be facing as they try and navigate through their academic work.

ACCESSIBILITY. Students with disabilities or ongoing health conditions may have additional needs that require different degrees and levels of support in this new environment. Please be mindful, and reach out to the Centre for Accessibility as a resource.

FINANCES. Students and their families are concerned about covering tuition fees, cost of books and supplies, rent, and food. For some families, income has been significantly impacted. Students may have difficulty getting a summer job to cover their expenses or provide for their families. Due to this pandemic, financial concerns create extensive challenges.

LIVING ENVIRONMENTS. Students may be in environments and relational dynamics that are unsafe, abusive, and/or invalidating. Being in this space can negatively impact their well-being and their ability to be fully present in learning spaces. The physical spaces at home may also be challenging and restrictive. Students may not have access to quiet spaces to study or participate in online classes. They may also be juggling several roles at home (student, partner, parent, etc.) or caring for other family members or young children.

MENTAL HEALTH. There is a true sense of grief, sadness, and loss throughout our community. Mental health concerns (depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, etc.) are causing significant challenges in being able to perform academic and personal duties.



SHOW THAT YOU CARE

Set expectations at the beginning. Communicate with your students clearly and regularly and let them know that you care about their health and wellbeing, particularly during the strange time we are in. Highlight resources that are available to them and let them know that they can connect with you if they need to.

Acknowledge the whole student. Like you, students are navigating different roles and responsibilities and are adapting to a hybrid learning environment and/or a return to in-person learning.

Share a personal account. It is okay to share personal accounts and students may feel more connected with you when you humanize the situation. Examples of personal accounts could include: navigating the social interactions that come along with returning to in-person campus activities, the uncertainty of the ever evolving pandemic and reports in the media, being worried about friends and family in other parts of the country/world.

HOW TO REACH OUT AND SUPPORT STUDENTS

Acknowledge and normalize. Take the time to acknowledge that we are all in an unusual situation and that everyone is impacted in different ways, yourself included. Everyone has had to respond to the evolving situation and this can be challenging.

Check-in and tell them you care. One way to check-in is to do a quick survey or poll throughout the course to take the temperature of the class.

Connect them with resources. Assure students that you and the UBC community are there to support their experiences as students. Share relevant resources with them throughout the course and if you suspect an individual student is struggling, use the Green Folder and Early Alert protocols.

USE EARLY ALERT

Always submit an Early Alert concern as part of your response, regardless of the perceived severity.

Early Alert allows faculty, staff, and TAs to identify their concerns about students sooner and in a more coordinated way.

EARLY ALERT:

- Provides support for all students
- Allows for earlier support before difficulties become overwhelming
- Results in less time and fewer resources needed for students to recover
- Collects concerns from different sources across campus, allowing for a better understanding of individual student needs and how to provide appropriate support in a coordinated way
- Protects student privacy using a secure system
- Is not connected to the student's academic record

SUBMIT AN EARLY ALERT CONCERN

earlyalert.ubc.ca (monitored 7 days/week)

HOW DOES EARLY ALERT WORK?

1. Faculty and staff notice a student is facing difficulties and identify their concerns using Early Alert
 2. Managers, Student Support Services review all concerns submitted to ensure the student has been referred to the appropriate resource
 3. If the need for additional referral(s) is identified, an advisor will reach out and offer to connect the student to resources and supports.
- 92% of students respond positively to the invitation to meet with an advisor.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR WELLBEING:

UBC faculty and staff have access to a wide range of benefits and services

www.hr.ubc.ca/wellbeing-benefits/

HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

1. IF YOU'VE REACHED OUT TO THE STUDENT

- Be specific about the signs and behaviours that you've noticed > *"I've noticed you've missed the last two midterms"*
- Express your concern > *"I am concerned and wanted to check in to see how you're doing"*
- Reassure the student that reaching out to students who may be struggling is something all UBC faculty and staff do to help

IF A STUDENT DOESN'T WANT HELP

- Respect their decision. Accepting or refusing assistance must be left up to the student, except in emergencies
- Don't force the issue or pressure them into going to a referred resource
- Try to leave room for reconsideration later on > *"If you change your mind you can always access the resources I've provided to you"*

2. RESPOND WITH EMPATHY AND NORMALIZE STRESS

- Listen actively and help the student feel heard and understood > *"It sounds like you're facing some difficulties in your life right now"*
- Where stress seems related to academic pressures, acknowledge that stress is a normal part of the university experience

3. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:

Giving students an opportunity to talk often has a calming effect and helps to clarify their concerns

- What have you tried so far?
- What do you think the main challenge is?
- What type of support would be helpful?

4. DISCUSS RESOURCE OPTIONS

- Point out that help is available; while seeking help can feel difficult at first, it is a sign of strength
- Provide the student with information about resources and supports **(SEE NEXT PAGES)**
- Encourage the student to identify the next steps they plan to take

5. ENTER AN EARLY ALERT CONCERN:

- Whether or not you've had a conversation with the student, enter an Early Alert concern earlyalert.ubc.ca (monitored 7 days/week)

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Supporting Students in Distress in British Columbia



CONNECT TO RESOURCES



IMMINENT RISK OF HARM

- Active thoughts of suicide with a plan or suicide attempt
- Behaviour that is violent, destructive, aggressive, or threatening to self or others
- Student is confused, hallucinating, or has trouble remaining conscious



HIGH LEVEL OF DISTRESS

Examples:

- Deterioration in personal appearance and hygiene and significant impairment with daily tasks
- Expressions of severe hopelessness or references to suicide
- Self-harm behaviour such as recent cutting or hitting, severely restricted eating with weight loss/severe binge eating
- Substance use concerns
- Loss of touch with reality /severely disorganized thinking
- Physical health concerns

ON CAMPUS (AT UBCV)

► STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Student to go to nearest hospital - Call 911
2. Call UBC Campus Security 604.822.2222

Enter an Early Alert concern at earlyalert.ubc.ca (monitored 7 days/week). Refer to page 2.

► RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS:

During office hours

- UBC Student Health Service
604.822.7011
Or student's family doctor or nearest medical clinic

After-hours or in an emergency

- 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline 988
988.ca
- Urgent Care, UBC Hospital 604.822.7121
- Nearest hospital emergency department (24/7)
- Access and Assessment Centre, Vancouver General Hospital
604.675.3700
(7:30am-9:30pm)

IN BC (NOT ON CAMPUS)

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After-hours or in an emergency

- 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline 988
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- Nearest hospital emergency urgent care (24/7)
- Urgent Primary Care Centres
healthlinkbc.ca/services-and-resources/
- Access and Assessment Centre, Vancouver General Hospital
(if in Greater Vancouver) 604.675.3700
(7:30am-11pm)

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CONNECT TO RESOURCES



ALL OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Examples:

- Low or irritable mood with change in energy, appetite, sleep, and/or concentration, which is impacting daily functioning
- Persistent worry, obsessions, agitation, irrationality, racing thoughts, panic attacks
- Flashbacks to a traumatic event, intrusive memories and thoughts
- Interpersonal conflict
- Lack of social support
- Disordered eating

ON CAMPUS (AT UBCV)

► RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS:

During office hours

- **Counselling Services**
Call 604.822.3811

After-hours or anytime

- **Here2Talk** here2talk.ca/home
Free, immediate, confidential counselling and community referral services available 24/7 via app, phone, and web to all UBC students.
- **Medimap** medimap.ca
See available walk-in clinics and wait times, and book an appointment before visiting the location.
- **Mind Health BC** mindhealthbc.ca
Take an online mental health assessment and find resources
- **Health Link BC** call 811 or visit healthlinkbc.ca
Check physical health symptoms online and find resources
- **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Helpline**
1.855.242.3310

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CONNECT TO RESOURCES



GENERAL SUPPORT

Examples:

- Stress about exams, deadlines, grades, roommates, relationships, finances, adjustment to university
- Advice about healthy eating, sleep, or sexual health

ON CAMPUS (AT UBCV)

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During office hours

- **Visit the Wellness Centre**
page on students.ubc.ca for up to date information on services available in the Wellness Centre
- **Centre for Accessibility**
Email or go online to book an appointment. Accommodations for disabilities including chronic mental health conditions
- **Wellness Centre Info Desk**
Get help navigating health and wellbeing resources from a peer in person or online at students.ubc.ca/health/wellness-centre or call 604 822 8450

After-hours or anytime

- **Here2Talk** here2talk.ca/home
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- **students.ubc.ca/health**
Find resources, tutorials, and helpful tips organized by topic

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Supporting Students in Distress outside of British Columbia



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OUTSIDE OF BC (IN CANADA)

► STEPS TO TAKE:

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OUTSIDE OF CANADA

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► RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS:

During office hours

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After-hours or in an emergency

- 24/7
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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR REQUESTS FOR COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT CAN BE DIRECTED TO:

Student Health and Wellbeing
Office of the Vice President, Students
604.822.3644 urgent.vps@ubc.ca

Enter an Early Alert concern at earlyalert.ubc.ca (*monitored 7 days/week*). Refer to page 2.

Thank you to all the post-secondary universities that have helped inspire UBC's Green Folder

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