

STUDENT HEALTH & WELLBEING

Supporting Students in Distress in a Virtual Learning Environment

KEY MESSAGES FOR FACULTY & STAFF

As the global pandemic continues, students have continued to work to achieve their academic goals. During remote learning, students are often balancing multiple challenges and priorities, which can affect their capacity to learn and thrive.

Here are a few things that we have learned in the past year of this pandemic:

CHALLENGES STUDENTS MAY BE EXPERIENCING

Students bring their unique selves and situations to any learning environment, whether in class or online. Some students may thrive in the online learning environment, while others may struggle. We thank the staff and faculty that have “gone the extra mile” and reached out to students when they’ve needed support.

ACADEMICS Students continue to express concerns about failing exams, completing their terms, meeting graduation requirements, and other academic uncertainties. Some students report a lack of suitable workspaces or unreliable WIFI connections. Many have experienced increased difficulties with concentration, motivation, focus, and organization. We’ve heard from students that they appreciate the flexibility and support faculty members have provided. The Student Learning Hub is another great resource for undergraduate students to get help with learning support and study skills.

FINANCES Financial concerns during the pandemic are creating additional stress for many. Incomes have been significantly impacted for some members of our community. Students may have had increased difficulties with finding a summer job to pay their expenses or provide for their families. This creates increased concern about covering tuition fees, the cost of books and supplies, rent, and food.

GENERAL UNCERTAINTY As we negotiate the uncertainty and fear that can arise while living in a pandemic, we see specific worries arising for students. Students worry about their families, their academic goals, their career goals and their health. We know that many summer jobs, internships, and other arrangements have been put on hold, modified or cancelled. Many international students have been isolated from family and friends, and there have been increased worries about visa concerns and funding. These uncertainties have left many students feeling anxious and unmotivated. Many faculty members have noticed this distress and have referred students to Health and Wellness or to the virtual support offered by the Student Assistance Program.

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

LIVING ENVIRONMENTS Students may be in environments and relational dynamics that are challenging, restrictive, unsafe, abusive, and/or invalidating. Some students may not have access to quiet spaces. Others may be juggling several roles at home and find it difficult to make time for their studies. All of these factors negatively affect the ability to be fully present in the learning environment.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS During the past year of the pandemic, students have not only left behind their classes and academics, but also future goals and aspirations. There is a true sense of grief, sadness, and loss throughout our community for students, staff and faculty. Many mental health concerns (depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, etc.) are causing significant challenges in being able to perform both academically and personally. This pandemic is an opportunity to reach out and end any stigma about mental health concerns, as we strive to ensure resiliency and wellbeing.



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 the online learning environment. Convey your awareness that students are facing a variety of challenges and encourage them to practice self-care.

Share a personal experience. It's okay to show students that you have a life outside the classroom and students may feel more connected with you when you humanize the situation. You can share an example of how you have had to adapt; for example, how you have been spending time with your pets or kids or how you have creatively set up a workstation from your bedroom.

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 Blue 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 to all students; student participation is voluntary
- Allows for earlier support before difficulties become overwhelming
- Results in less time and fewer resources needed for students to move forward
- 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 Monday to Friday during standard office hours)

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
- **Reminder:** Early Alert is not an emergency service. For an emergency response, call Campus Security or 911

TAKE CARE OF YOUR WELLBEING

UBC faculty and staff have access to a wide range of benefits and services
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?
- Do you have the support that you need?

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 page](#))
- 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 Monday to Friday during standard office hours)

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

STEPS TO TAKE

AT UBCO CAMPUS

- 1 **Call 911**
Student to go to nearest hospital
- 2 **Call UBCO Campus Security**
250 807 8111 (Emergency) or
250 807 9236 (non emergency)

IN BC (NOT ON CAMPUS)

- 1 **Call 911**
Student to go to nearest hospital

IN CANADA (OUTSIDE BC)

- 1 **Call 911**
Student to go to nearest hospital

OUTSIDE OF CANADA

- 1 **Call 911**
Student to go to nearest hospital or **local emergency services phone number** BC emergency services may be able to assist

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

AT UBCO CAMPUS

During office hours
Health and Wellness
250 807 9270 or student's family doctor or nearest medical clinic

After-hours or in an emergency
24/7 Crisis Centre
crisiscentre.bc.ca
1 800 784 2433

Kelowna General Hospital
250 862 4000

Vernon Jubilee Hospital
250 545 2211

IN BC (NOT ON CAMPUS)

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Health and Wellness
250 807 9270 or student's family doctor or nearest medical clinic

After-hours or in an emergency
24/7 Crisis Centre
crisiscentre.bc.ca
1 800 784 2433

Nearest hospital emergency department (24/7)

IN CANADA (OUTSIDE BC)

During office hours
Student's family doctor or nearest medical clinic

After-hours or in an emergency
24/7 Crisis Services Canada
crisiservicescanada.ca
1 833 456 4566 available in French and English

Nearest hospital emergency department (24/7)

OUTSIDE OF CANADA

During office hours
Student's family doctor or nearest medical clinic

After-hours or in an emergency
Nearest hospital emergency department (24/7)

Enter an **Early Alert** concern at earlyalert.ubc.ca (monitored Monday to Friday during standard office hours). Refer to page 2.

The **Student Learning Hub** is great resource for students to receive help with learning supports and study skills.

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

AT UBCO CAMPUS

During office hours

Health and Wellness Counselling services
students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness
250 807 9270

After-hours or anytime

Student Assistance Plan
students.ok.ubc.ca/sap
1 833 590 1328 (call toll-free within North America) or 1 604 757 9734 (call collect outside of North America)

Here2Talk here2talk.ca
24/7 access for students anywhere in the world, single session personal counselling by phone or online chat

Wellness Together Canada
ca.portal.gs
24/7 access for Canadians anywhere in the world. Online assessment and connection to e-mental health resources, individual counselling by phone, text, video

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 healthlinkbc.ca
811 or check physical health symptoms online and find resources

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Helpline
1 855 242 3310

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Medimap medimap.ca
See available walk-in clinics and wait times, and book an appointment before visiting the location (in some provinces)

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GENERAL SUPPORT

Examples:

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

AT UBCO CAMPUS

During office hours

Health and Wellness

students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness

250 807 9270

healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca

General support for students' mental and physical health.

Disability Resource Centre

students.ok.ubc.ca/drc

250 807 8053

drc.questions@ubc.ca

Accommodations for disabilities, including chronic mental health conditions.

After-hours or anytime

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office

svpro.ok.ubc.ca

250 807 9640

svpro.okanagan@ubc.ca

Information for those impacted by sexual or gender-based violence, harassment, or harm, on or off-campus

Wellness Centre: Online

canvas.ubc.ca/enroll/3XXRJ3

For up-to-date health education, tips and strategies for wellbeing and resources on Canvas - All UBC students can self-enroll

Student Assistance Plan

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(call collect outside of North America)

IN BC (NOT ON CAMPUS)

During office hours

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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR REQUESTS FOR COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT CAN BE DIRECTED TO:

Health & Wellness

University Centre 337

250 807 9270 | healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca

students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness

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

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