

10 tips for dealing with distressed students

- 1 **Stay calm**
- 2 If it's an emergency situation, dial 999. Then report to reception/security and fill in an incident report.
- 3 An emergency situation may include: a student who is aggressive, at risk of harm to themselves or to others, threatening or has attempted suicide, expressing irrational and bizarre thoughts and behaviours, in immediate danger or in need of medical attention.
- 4 You should always take seriously a student who expresses suicidal thoughts or actions.
 - When a student contacts you via telephone and expresses suicidal thoughts or has already made plans to end life, try and prolong the call and listen carefully. Call 999 if the risk to the student is high. In other cases, advise them to see their GP, speak to a mental health practitioner (if they have one), contact the Samaritans or contact the university's counselling service.
 - Where a student expresses suicidal thought via email or other electronic messaging service, contact them by phone at the earliest possible opportunity and follow the guidelines above.
- 5 **If it is not an emergency situation**, accompany the student to a quiet area – but not isolated one – and discreetly notify a colleague of your whereabouts.
- 6 Explain that you are not a qualified counsellor but that you are there to listen and may have to make a written account of the conversation.
- 7 You should also state that you cannot promise confidentiality for instance where there may be legal implications, e.g. assault, rape, illegal drugs, etc.
- 8 Do not advise the student on matters for which you have no expertise. Instead, refer the student to the appropriate LiSS service (see details overleaf).
- 9 **In all situations**, write a brief account of what happened and the action you took.
- 10 Notify your line manager of what has happened

Internal contact details (during normal working hours)

Dave Wilson

LiSS Manager (Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy)

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Work mobile 0781 421 9494

Honor Rhodes

Head of Learning Services (LiSS)

Tel: 01524 590811 (x5811)

Work mobile: 07980731954

Counselling and wellbeing drop in sessions

www.cumbria.ac.uk/need2talk.

Safeguarding issue—contact a Safeguarding Officer

www.cumbria.ac.uk/safeguarding

The Chaplaincy

www.cumbria.ac.uk/Chaplaincy

Useful external contacts

The Samaritans

www.samaritans.org/

08457 909090

Email: jo@samaritans.org

NHS Direct

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

0845 4647