

**Student Support Handbook
for use by Guidance Tutors
and other staff working with students**

September 2011

Student Support and Wellbeing

Contents

Background and Introduction 3

Northumbria University, Student Guidance Principles: Good Practice Guidelines 4

Student Support & Wellbeing Teams – Contact Information and Related Links..... 6

Other University Support Services 8

Help and Support with Library, IT and Study Skills 11

Duty of Care to Students..... 12

Values..... 13

Northumbria Students 13

Professional Boundaries 14

Good Practice When Working With Students 16

The Student Experience – common issues which can impact on the ability to study/participate..... 20

The Student Experience – more complex issues which can impact on the ability to study 21

Case Studies 24

General Case Studies 25

Specific/Exceptional Case Studies..... 31




Useful Links 34

Background and Introduction

The aim of the Handbook is to provide advice and guidance related to the practical aspects of Guidance Tutoring. Information covers:

- ✚ Student Guidance Principles – Good Practice Guidelines
- ✚ Student Support and related strategic developments
- ✚ Student Support Research
- ✚ The Role of Student Support & Wellbeing
- ✚ Other University Services
- ✚ Duty of Care
- ✚ Values
- ✚ Northumbria Students – the diverse student population
- ✚ Professional Boundaries
- ✚ Good practice when working with students
- ✚ The Student Experience – common issues which can impact on the ability to study
- ✚ The Student Experience – more complex issues which can impact on the ability to study
- ✚ Case Studies
- ✚ Useful Electronic Links

Northumbria University, Student Guidance Principles: Good Practice Guidelines

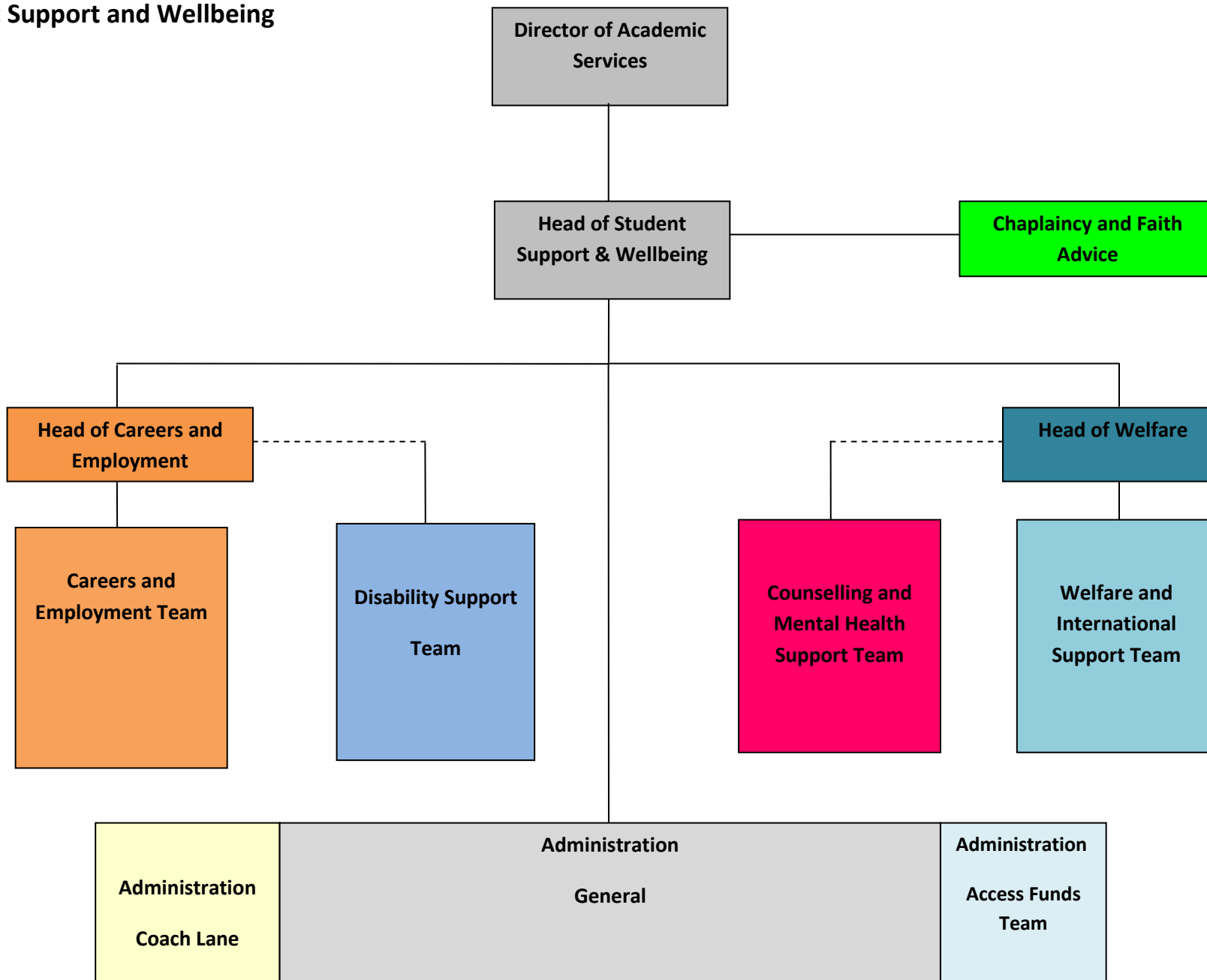
- a) The University defines guidance as an 'entitlement' to defined support.
- b) This support will be provided through a variety of means, rather than exclusively through a single 'tutor'.
- c) All Schools will seek to ensure their students receive at least the 'minimum entitlement'. Delivery mechanisms may vary to suit local circumstances.
- d) The 'entitlement' will comprise three strands of support:
 -  Induction
 -  Academic facilitation
 -  Referral

Induction is support for students during the first semester which seeks to enable them to 'settle' effectively into their new surroundings. Induction will involve 'meet and greet', ensuring familiarity with new surroundings, introduction to other students on the programme, and comprise a series of timetabled sessions to ensure, (as much as possible) attendance. While this activity should be carried out by individuals who will remain a point of contact for students, not all academic staff need be involved.

Academic facilitation is generally regarded as supporting the regular process of teaching and learning, and is therefore the responsibility of every academic member of staff who is involved in teaching delivery. Its aim is to help students become more effective learners. While some forms of academic facilitation are currently included in notional student workload on the module descriptor (e.g. project supervision) the transfer of 'guidance' hours in current allocations in the Workload Model to TDRA may allow staff more time to provide academic support to their students. This may, for instance, be provided in the form of an additional weekly office hour. It will be important for Schools to make formal arrangements for the central monitoring of student performance and attendance.

Referral is shorthand for the process by which students who need support are directed to those best placed to provide it. In many cases it is useful for students to have access to a named individual with whom they have developed a relationship and with whom they might discuss issues of concern.

Student Support and Wellbeing



Student Support & Wellbeing Teams – Contact Information and Related Links

You can access all Support Teams via the Student Support & Wellbeing website: www.northumbria.ac.uk/ssw

Addresses:

City Campus

Northumberland Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8ST

Tel: 0191 227 4127

Coach Lane Campus

Allendale Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7XA

Tel: 0191 215 6590

Chaplaincy and Faith Advice

Fourth Floor, Wynne Jones Building
City Campus
Tel: 0191 227 3284

Opening Times: **City Campus:** Monday – Thursday 0900 - 1700: Friday 0900 - 1630: **Coach Lane:** Monday – Thursday 0900 – 1300 and 1400 – 1700.

Contact Options:

Careers and Employment Team (CES)

Tel: 0191 227 4204 or 4711

Email: sv.careers@northumbria.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/careers>

Counselling & Mental Health Support

Tel: 0191 227 4576

Email: svmentalhealth@northumbria.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/counsellingandmentalhealth>

Disability Support

Tel: 0191 227 3849

Email: sv.disability@northumbria.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/disabilities>

Welfare and International Support

Tel: 0191 227 4967 or 0191 227 4127

Email: sv.accessfunds@northumbria.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/welfareandinternational>

Chaplaincy and Faith Advice

Tel: 0191 227 3284

Email: chaplaincy@northumbria.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/chaplaincy>

Student Support & Wellbeing @ Coach Lane Campus

Tel: 0191 215 6590

Web: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sswcoachlane>

Other University Support Services

These are all detailed in the Student Guide – NU11- see link below, which all students receive on enrolment

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/5007/sspdf/studentguide.pdf>

Here you will find details of:

A-Z of Student Survival: This guide is produced for students by Student Support & Wellbeing. It covers many issues and can also be a useful resource for staff. Follow link to:

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/studentaz/survival/>

Academic Registry: Enrolment, Timetables, Electronic Learning Platform, Assessment Regulations.

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/>

Accommodation Services: Student Residences, Flat Finding, Catering Facilities, University Shop(s)

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/acc/>

Cultural Diversity at Northumbria: Outline of the Equality & Diversity Regulations and details on international, EU and UK customs.

Finance: Tuition Fees Payment, Scholarship, Bursaries.

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/finance/>

Graduate School: Support for PGR Students.

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/researchandconsultancy/graduateschool/>

IT: Helpline, User ID, Open Access Areas, My Northumbria, Email, Printing, Wireless Network

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/its/>

Library & Learning Services: Library Resources, Library Induction and Skills Plus, Part-Time and Distance Learning Support, NORA the Library Search Tool. See page 22 with details of **ask4help**

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/library/>

Language Resources Centre:

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/library/about/spaces/lrc/>

Maps: City Campus and Coach Lane Campus

School Offices: Reporting Sickness and Absence, Assignment Extensions, Handing in Assignments, Interruption, Withdrawal, PECS (Personal Extenuating Circumstances).

Security: Emergency Contact Numbers

Team Northumbria: Sports Societies, Sports Facilities.

<http://www.teamnorthumbria.com/>

Student Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Acceptable Conduct in Taught Classes, Study Spaces, Libraries And Other Learning Environments.

Students Union: Advice and Representation, Entertainment, Activities, Societies, Northumbria Student Community Action, Food and Drink, NUS Card.












<http://mysu.northumbria.ac.uk/>

Travel and Transport: CL Shuttle Bus.

Website Discussion Forums: Official University Statement on the use of these

You can also access related Student Support Documentation for staff at: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/staff/ssd/>

This includes:

-  Staff Guidance Handbook
-  Guidance Principles Document
-  Equality and Diversity Policy
-  Duty of Care Good Practice Guidelines
-  NU11 Student Handbook
-  Student Finance for Undergraduate Students 2011/12
-  Student Finance – Implications for Course Change 2011/12
-  Student Support and Wellbeing Training Package 2011
-  Northumbria Student Learning Values 2011/12 (Northumbria Student Union)
-  Spectrum
-  University guide to student visa and immigration issues

Help and Support with Library, IT and Study Skills



Face to Face: Ask at the Enquiry Desk in the Library

Telephone: Call 0191 227 4125

Email: ask4help@northumbria.ac.uk

Duty of Care to Students

Before working with students you need to have an understanding of what we mean by Duty of Care. The University produced in 2004 'Duty of Care: Good Practice Guidelines for Academic and Administrative Staff'. See link below:

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/worddocuments/ssdocs/duty_of_care.doc

This document is updated annually. The 2011/12 revision is likely to be complete by early 2012. The document includes:

- ✚ Definition of Duty of Care
- ✚ Legal Dimensions of Duty of Care
- ✚ Definition of potentially vulnerable student groups
- ✚ Policy/Good Practice Documents on:
 - 🕒 Data Protection and Confidentiality
 - 🕒 Equal Opportunities
 - 🕒 Disability Discrimination Act
 - 🕒 Supporting Students Aged under 18 years
 - 🕒 Misuse of Illegal Drugs
 - 🕒 Disclosure of Information to Parents, Relatives or Guardians
 - 🕒 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection Policy
 - 🕒 Supporting Transgender Students
 - 🕒 Mental Health Policy
 - 🕒 Notifiable Diseases Planning Document
 - 🕒 Emergency Protocol
 - 🕒 Bereavement Policy
 - 🕒 Guidelines for Placement Learning at Northumbria (including field trips, clinical practice and voluntary activity)
 - 🕒 Writing Academic References – Good Practice Guidelines

Values

Our approach with students should be underpinned by the following core values:

- ✚ Respect for the dignity of the individual – every student is an individual and has worth, and must be treated with dignity and respect
- ✚ Individual potential – our students have talent and potential. Our role is to help them develop and capitalise on that Diversity
- ✚ and fairness – every student should be treated fairly and with equity, regardless of ethnic origin, colour, gender, disability, marital status, sexuality, religion, age, or any other distinction

Northumbria Students

We have a diverse student population of over 35,000 students, of those approximately:

- ✚ 26.5% are mature
- ✚ 16% are from outside the UK and EU
- ✚ 3% are from the EU
- ✚ 4.5% of UK based students are from an ethnic minority
- ✚ 4.7% have a disability requiring support
- ✚ 24% are studying part time

This diversity brings with it a complex array of student issues and concerns, many of which require expert advice, e.g. visa and immigration, disability, student funding.

Professional Boundaries

Time

You need to be clear about when you are available for students and also how much time you can spend with them in individual sessions during the term. Staff who operate an 'open door' policy risk being overwhelmed by students requiring attention and also risk blurring boundaries which can lead to role tension and role conflict.

Role Tension

This can be especially difficult for Guidance Tutors who have to combine teaching/marking/assessing with other tutoring responsibilities. However, the same role tension can occur for other staff working in Student Support and Wellbeing, School Offices, Wellbeing Centres, Halls of Residence etc. Most staff working with students have to combine a supporting role with other aspects such as: giving negative feedback, applying disciplinary procedures, rejecting applications for assignment extensions, rejecting PECS. It is important for all staff to get the balance right to ensure that students are not confused and angry by what they may see as a withdrawal of support at a time when they most need it. This means when supporting students you should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries to ensure that students understand your professional role and so can accept and understand the other duties involved within that role.

Role Conflict

This is about maintaining the correct level of informality/formality in your relationships with students. Whilst we want to work with students in a manner which is friendly and relaxed we need to ensure that students do not misinterpret this in any way. Being overly friendly or familiar with a student can lead to a distorted unprofessional relationship where the student begins to think of you as a friend rather than as a staff member and this can make it very difficult for both the student and staff member when the situations referred to earlier need to be addressed.

Professional Boundaries and Effective Referral

Providing effective and accessible support for students can sometimes bring with it an element of dependency. Some students can become more and more reliant on the support provided and so can become frequent visitors and e-mailers. Providing effective support for students involves enabling them to become self-reliant and in-control – follow the guidelines related to time and professional boundaries to ensure that students do not become dependent on the support of one individual. Similarly, where staff are supporting students with a number of complex issues, it can be easy to think that you are the only person who can help that student. This is when effective referral is important to ensure that boundaries are not blurred and that the student can be moved on to other staff members who can more effectively provide specialist support.

Effective referral is important to (a) ensure students receive the best possible advice and support and (b) enable appropriate professional boundaries to be maintained. Given the complexity of student issues, some of which are underpinned by legal dimensions related to Duty of Care, staff must ensure that they are referring students to specialist advisers when they are faced with a situation which is outside their normal professional expertise. It is better to tell a student that you cannot provide the information required than to give them inappropriate or wrong information especially as such information could impact upon their student status, immigration status or finances.

Confidentiality

Information on confidentiality and related data protection issues can be found in the Duty of Care Good Practice Guidelines. The link below is related to confidentiality and counselling but it is also a useful rule for Guidance Tutors and other staff working with students.

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/stud_serv/counsellingsupport/isitsafe/confidentiality/

Some of these issues/situations will be illustrated more fully in the Case Studies Section later in the handbook.

Good Practice When Working With Students

Communication

Face-to-face Communication with Students

Where possible this should always be via scheduled meetings – it is not good practice to allow a student to ‘drop in’ when they want to. For a first meeting it is useful to use open questions which can help the student to relax, for example; ‘How are you settling in to Uni/halls/lectures?’, ‘You said in your email that you wanted to see me about your placement/coursework/timetable. Would you like to say a bit more about that?’ When scheduling a meeting establish a time limit – e.g. 2.00-2.30 and be consistent in finishing the meeting at that scheduled time. Keeping a record of all meetings is good practice.

Written Information Provided for Students

Whether in hard copy or electronic format this must be clear and unambiguous. It can be used to establish relevant rules and boundaries to ensure that the student clearly understands these from the onset of their programme. For example, it can be used to detail your availability, the average response time to queries, your expectations in relation to punctuality, behaviour in lectures, e-mail style expected etc.

E-mail Communication

E-mail communication by its nature tends to be informal and increasingly this form of communication is preferred by many students because of its convenience and speed. It is important to remember that an email forms a written record of your communication for both you and the student. Ensure that email correspondence to a student is professional and courteous. As with any communication the message can be misinterpreted, especially where a student is feeling unconfident or unhappy. The NU10 Student Guide contains good practice guidelines for students in relation to email correspondence to University staff but the guidance is equally useful for staff (see electronic link to Guide on page 12). Always think before you forward an email from a student – check the contents to ensure there is nothing of a sensitive, personal nature which cannot be shared. Ensure that when forwarding an email from a student and commenting on the content of that email that your comments are appropriate and not open to misinterpretation at a later date.

Handling Difficult Situations

Giving Bad News to Students

Sometimes you may find yourself in a situation of having to meet with a student to give them bad news. This may be academic related – they cannot progress, they are being asked to leave the programme, they cannot continue with Honours. Other situations may include: advising a student of a family bereavement or family illness. All such situations need to be handled sensitively. The reactions of people to such situations are unpredictable and varied, ranging from extreme distress to extreme anger. When preparing for such situations you should consider having another member of staff with you. You should also acquaint yourself with the student's history to ensure you are fully prepared; does the student have mental health issues? have there been previous instances of aggression? With international students be aware of the investment they have made in the programme in terms of cost, separation from family, pride and expectations which may mean their reactions could be potentially more extreme. You may want to look at the Lone Worker Policy produced by Human Resources as it may be helpful in preparing for such situations.

<http://northumbria.ac.uk/static/worddocuments/hrdocs/loneworker.doc>

Failure

When a student is failing it is important that they feel supported and in contact with you rather than abandoned. Often the student may imagine the worst, for example that they will be thrown off the course for failing an assignment or exam, and it is your role to let them know what their options are in the circumstances. Remember that alongside academic implications of failure students will need to take account of financial implications, visa and immigration implications (for international students) possible employment implications (for part-time students). Ensure that students are referred to the relevant Team in Student Support & Wellbeing to discuss these issues.

Potential Disciplinary Issues

It is helpful to deal with discipline in a way that makes it clear that while the person is not rejected, the behaviour is not condoned. The University has very clear regulations in relation to handling disciplinary issues and these regulations should always be followed (see url under 'Useful Links' Section at the end of the Document). It is important to ensure consistency in relation to responding to disciplinary issues – students will be very aware if there is a difference in response to discipline and will challenge if they think they have been treated differently from other students.

Dealing with Challenging/Disruptive Student Behaviour

Regardless of whether the behaviour takes place in learning spaces or whether it is in other environments: school offices, reception points, individual offices, there is an overarching principle to all disruptive/challenging behaviour – 'Prevention is Better than Cure' so if you:

- ✚ Let your attitude and behaviour serve as a model for their behaviour
- ✚ Have clear written and verbal guidelines as to what is acceptable behaviour
- ✚ Be consistent in your attitude and responses
- ✚ Always maintain professional boundaries
- ✚ Do not ignore poor behaviour – respond to it albeit initially in a facilitative way
- ✚ Be prepared to use the disciplinary process

Then you will reduce the incidences of such behaviour.

There are a number of University documents to draw on when advising students about acceptable behaviour:

- ✚ University Guidelines on Acceptable Conduct in Learning Spaces
- ✚ Northumbria Student Learning Values
- ✚ University Statement on Website Discussion Forums
- ✚ The definition in the Student Handbook of Regulations of what constitutes 'Misconduct'

All are available in NU11 Student Handbook – see under 'Useful Links'.

Coping Mechanisms when Dealing with Challenging/Disruptive Student Behaviour

- ✚ Understand there is no excuse for such behaviour – neither physical disability nor psychological issues – we are all bound by the same codes of conduct.
- ✚ Staff safety is paramount – always ensure your own safety
- ✚ Be aware of your own professional boundaries – do not stray outside of your comfort zone
- ✚ Keep calm – that way you are in control of the situation
- ✚ Allow the student the opportunity to explain their issue/request without interruption – show you are listening by asking questions. Do not be afraid to paraphrase for the student
- ✚ If they reject your response and begin to repeat themselves – move them on
- ✚ Think about moving into ‘broken record syndrome’ it works
- ✚ If very upset – you can move them to somewhere more private but beware of developing an expectation in the student that if they always show distress they are dealt with differently
- ✚ If rude, aggressive etc. it is acceptable to tell them so – give them an early warning – if it continues contact Security

There is available to help staff with these issues a Red Guide (Number 50) ‘Disruptive Student Behaviour. Red guides are available at: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/iteia/pubs/redandrecapguides/redguides/browseredguides/?view=Standard>

There is an online resource ‘What Would You Do?’ available via Blackboard. This consists of a set of ‘incidents’ relating to disruptive behaviour in academic situations. To access this (restricted to Northumbria University staff):

- ✚ Log into the eLearning Portal
- ✚ Select the ‘Organisations’ tab
- ✚ Next to the self enrol module ‘what Would You Do?’ click on the enrol button
- ✚ The resource is self explanatory from then

Student Support & Wellbeing also offers a training session related to Working with Disruptive/Challenging students.

The Student Experience – common issues which can impact on the ability to study/participate

This section discusses some of the wider issues that can affect a student during their time at University. When a student comes to you in distress, whilst they may present with an academic issue, often their inability to deal with this issue is underpinned by other factors which are affecting them – these can be emotional, practical or both.

Transition: whether the student is coming from school, college, a gap year, employment, caring for family, from foster care, or from outside of the UK, they all have adjustments to make in terms of becoming a student. For many the commitment and investment they have made into this experience is enormous and so the pressure to 'get it right' can be intense. This period of transition can be painful and result in a student wishing to leave, change course, change accommodation. It is important that students are supported during this period of transition with effective practical advice and referral to the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team where appropriate.

Adjusting to a different culture: While international students can experience similar difficulties to UK students, they also face a number of challenges in adapting to a new social, cultural, political and educational environment. The initial excitement of arriving at University can give way to a difficult and distressing phase when students can feel confused, frustrated, disappointed, anxious and homesick, finding themselves immersed in a new and different culture. International students can also be carrying the weight of family expectations which increases the pressure to achieve. Staff should be aware of the adjustments that international students are making and the potential impact on their abilities during the first semester. International students should be encouraged to participate in the University programme of social activities 'One Planet', organised jointly by Student Support & Wellbeing and the Students Union. Such participation can assist with integration and alleviate feelings of isolation.

Financial Issues: most students are concerned about the financial implications of studying. For international students concerns are related to the cost of tuition fees, worry about not being able to pay, the cost of living in the UK. For UK students it is the amount of debt they are accruing (on average £8,000 per year to the Student Loan Company), the number of hours they are working and the potential impact this is having on their final degree and ultimately, their potential for graduate employment. Because of the immediacy of financial issues – rent has to be paid, programme equipment needs to be purchased - this can often be the trigger for poor performance, disruptive behaviour or withdrawal. The Welfare and International Support Team can advise students on: all types of student funding, effective budgeting, application to the Access to Learning Funds, Government Benefits where relevant e.g. single parents, students with a disability.

Leaving University

Students can experience anxiety about what to do after graduation and as a consequence motivation and achievement may be affected. This is especially so in the final year but can also occur throughout the period of their programme. All students have invested heavily to complete their programme, in terms of money, impact on their families and personal endeavour. As they reach the end of their programme they are aware of family expectations, peer pressure and the difficulties of moving into the world of work. Information, advice and guidance is available from the Careers and Employment Team (CET) on career options, employment and further study as well as the process of job search. Students should be encouraged to use the CET from an early point in their academic career to enable them to clarify their ideas and make decisions on their future before the pressures of the final year build up.

The Student Experience – more complex issues which can impact on the ability to study

Panic Attacks

Students can react to potentially threatening situations such as examinations by experiencing a ‘panic attack’, which is an exaggeration of the body’s normal response to fear, stress or excitement. It is characterised by: breathlessness, rapid heart beat and chest pain and can last anywhere between 5 and 20 minutes. You can help by:

- ✚ Understanding how frightening this must feel for the student
- ✚ Reassuring them that whilst uncomfortable it will stop very soon
- ✚ Encourage them to breath slowly and regularly – breathing into a paper bag or cupped hands helps
- ✚ Refer to the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team when they are calmer

Depression

This can range from feelings of dejection and despondency to more severe depressive illness. More severe depression can lead to lethargy and a withdrawal from academic and social life. Staff should be alert to the signs of depression and refer when necessary. Signs you may notice are:

- ✚ Lack of energy, tiredness
- ✚ Tearfulness

- ✚ Difficulty in concentrating/forgetfulness
- ✚ Low self esteem
- ✚ Failure to attend class
- ✚ Unrealistic ideas or worries
- ✚ Hopelessness about the future
- ✚ Talk of suicide

Refer to the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team as appropriate

Self Harm

This is a broad term for many acts which cause personal harm including self cutting or burning. Any students who indicate they are self harming should be referred to the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team as soon as possible. Remember they may also have wounds which need medical treatment and they should be encouraged to seek help for this.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are evidenced by a marked weight loss and the student looking frail and ill. You should not make comments about the appearance of the student but could express concern about their general health and suggest they may want to see someone about this. Students can be referred to the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team.

Suicide

A potentially suicidal person needs to be listened to and taken seriously. Staff may feel unable to cope with such a situation and they can discuss the issue in confidence with a member of the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team. Staff should be alert to possible indicators such as:

- ✚ A degree of isolation that is unbearable
- ✚ Expression of feelings of failure and loss of self esteem
- ✚ Becoming withdrawn and having difficulty in communicating
- ✚ Talking about suicide
- ✚ Taking unnecessary risks
- ✚ Recovery from a period of depression or other mental health condition

Sometimes a student may choose not to disclose suicidal thoughts to anyone which can result in attempted or actual suicide. Staff should not see themselves as responsible for this but if they are affected by this then they can arrange to see a member of the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team.

Students Experiencing Bereavement

The initial response to the death of someone close can be shock and disorientation which can last for some time. Later, bereaved students may experience: sadness, negativity, anger and resentment. The bereavement will almost certainly affect the student's ability to work and study. Practical help in the form of assignment extensions, PECS and referral to the Access to Learning Funds (where part-time work is difficult) should be made available to the student. Students can also be referred to the Counselling and Mental Health Support Team.

Case Studies

The following case studies provide examples of the sorts of issues students may bring to you.

It can help to break down the case study issues into thinking about:

- What are your responsibilities as a tutor/ member of staff?
- What other sources of help are available?

General Case Studies

These cover a variety of possible concerns/issues with which a student may arrive at University, and outline effective referral to ensure appropriate support for the student.

Specific/Exceptional Case Studies

In relation to these case studies there is no 'one size fits all answer' – given the variety of support systems across Schools and the variety of programmes with their own specific demands and possible professional body involvement, we offer possible suggestions to help think about the situation.

General Case Studies

Case Study 1

Joe is 19, in his first year of study. He has moved from the south of the UK and frequent travel home is expensive. He lives in self catering halls on campus and so will need to shop and cook. He is getting the tuition fees loan but because of parental income only gets 75% of the living cost loan – his parents are expected to contribute the remaining 25%. This means he is eligible for the University Scholarship but not the Government Mandatory Bursary. *What are the concerns/issues Joe might face as a first year student? Who might he approach for support/guidance?*

Possible Concerns/Issues

- Homesickness
- Making friends
- Meeting the academic demands of the course/self directed study
- Coping with self sufficiency: shopping/cooking/paying bills etc.
- Managing a budget
- Balancing study and social life
- Possible relationship difficulties
- Pressure from family to keep in touch
- Attendance and punctuality in what can be perceived as a fairly relaxed atmosphere
- Accommodation for next year
- Keeping healthy
- Keeping safe

Referral Options

Making Friends – Students Union/Student Societies/One Planet Social Activities programme/Sport Activities through Team Northumbria

Money concerns – Welfare and International Support Team for budgeting advice/application to the Access to Learning Fund/advice on overdrafts/advice on University Scholarship. Careers and Employment Team for part-time work options. Welcome Fayre for information on rail and bus travel cards and other discount cards.

Keeping Healthy and Keeping Safe – booklet available from Welfare and International Support Team website/relevant links via A-Z of Student Survival, safety video download on the web, weekly police surgeries in Student Support & Wellbeing.

Accommodation for next year – Accommodation Services or their web site

Academic/Study Skills issues – Tutor/ask4help in Library and Learning Services

General programme issues – Tutor/School Office/Academic Facilitation Team in NBS/Wellbeing Centre in SASS

Homesickness/relationship issues/parental issues – Counselling and Mental Health Support Team

Case Study 2

Gemma is a first year student on an arts based programmes. Whilst she is a talented artist and very creative, she has always had difficulties with written work and at her last school they suggested she might be dyslexic. She is worried about this now that she understands the level of written work required of her. She has also been worried by the difference in teaching methods from school and realises that there is more responsibility to coordinate her own work, meet deadlines, work as part of a study group. She is worried about her ability to do this and indicates she is thinking about withdrawing from her programme. *How can Gemma be supported and enabled to remain on her programme?*

Support to assist her with remaining on her programme

Her Tutor/Programme Leader – they need to be aware of her academic concerns and they can discuss the issues with the Disability Support Team

Disability Support Team – to arrange a dyslexia assessment, receive advice on Dyslexia Tutorial Support/Disabled Students Allowance/the availability of the Support Worker Service, to be made aware of specialist equipment/software.

Access to Learning Fund – to apply for possible financial support with the costs of the dyslexia assessment

ask4help, Library and Learning Services – for advice and help on related study skills, time management, group work.

It is important to note two things.

- (1) The student may not be dyslexic and it should be borne in mind that suggesting an assessment is to confirm or rule out this possibility. The Dyslexia Tutorial Support/Disabled Students Allowance/Support Worker Service and access to specialist equipment will rely on evidence confirming that the student is dyslexic.
- (2) Gemma will also have all of the same issues that Joe has as a first year student and this fact should not be overlooked. It is important we do not compartmentalise students into categories: disabled/overseas/mature etc.

Case Study 3

Lai is a mature student, aged 32 years, from China who has come to University for a one year Postgraduate programme which is a 52 week programme, 38 weeks teaching and 14 weeks self directed project work. This is her first time outside China and being away from the protection of the family home. Her family have invested heavily to allow her to study in the UK consequently success is very important to her. She arrives in September and is allocated a place in self catered Halls on the City Campus. ***What are Lai's possible concerns/issues? Who can support her with these?***

Possible Concerns/Issues

- Culture Shock
- Homesickness/loneliness – how does she socialise
- Living in a communal space with predominantly young people
- Pressure to achieve
- Finance – opening a bank account/ understanding sterling
- Visa and Immigration issues
- Language and communication
- Health care
- Food – can she eat it/where to buy it
- Keeping in contact with her family
- Personal safety
- Study methods – different from those in China

Referral Options

Tutor/School Office – to discuss programme related issues and concerns

Ask International – for English language support via her School

ask4help, Library and Learning Services – study skills/understanding different study methods

Welfare and International Support – visa and immigration information, including registering with the Police/cultural issues/social activities – One Planet/Friends International – mentoring scheme for international students/keeping healthy and registering with a Doctor/keeping safe/opening a bank account

Accommodation Services – residence issues

Careers and Employment Team – meet the Careers Advisers (International Students)/details on part-time work

Chaplaincy and Faith Advice – social support, various groups

Questions to ask the student:

- Did she attend the International Student Induction? – if not refer to Welfare and International Support Team
- Did she receive her Coming to Study Booklet? – again refer the Welfare and International Support Team
- Has she had her Library induction?
- Does she have her computer ID?
- Does she know how to contact her Guidance Tutor/School Office?
- Does she know about the Students Union?

Case Study 4

Charles is a 35 year old student who has entered University to undertake a full-time degree after completing a Higher Education Foundation Course. He is a single parent with two children aged 7 and 3. This is his first time in Higher Education. *What are the possible issues he might face? Who can he approach for support and guidance?*

Possible Concerns/Issues

Finance issues – he may have been on Government Benefit previously and will need to know where his funding is coming from and when it is paid, how much he will get, what benefits he may retain as a single parent. He may also have current debts and loans which are a cause for concern.

Childcare – how much will it cost? what help there is to pay for this? how does he organise a nursery or childminder?

Timetable – essential to organise childcare and after school clubs and possible part-time work

Academic concerns – how will he measure up amongst lots of younger students fresh from education as he left school 17 years ago?

Concern about his children – is he being unfair to them taking on a full-time degree?

++ all of the general issues that other students face

Referral Options

Guidance Tutor/School Office – timetable/academic support

ask4help, Library and Learning Services – study support issues

Welfare and International Support Team – finance and benefit issues, advice on Access to Learning Fund, advice on childcare support, advice on Scholarships and Bursaries.

Careers and Employment Team – information on part-time work whilst studying

Students Union – social activities, opportunities to meet other students, student societies, especially possible Student Parent Society or Mature Students Society.

Specific/Exceptional Case Studies

Case Study 5

Yasmin is a first year student who appears to have lots of energy and enthusiasm. When she arrives in her School she is keen to speak with someone in the School to discuss some personal issues. She advises the staff member that she has come to University to escape from her family who she describes as 'dysfunctional'. She says her parents are separated, both with new partners and they both place demands on her in terms of wanting her attention, but she says they do not understand her. She also intimates the possibility of ongoing self harm. She indicates to you that she needs to have one person in the School with whom she can discuss this in confidence. When she leaves, you later receive an email from her saying how much better she feels after speaking with you, how you do understand her – unlike her parents. Over the next few days she becomes a frequent visitor to 'talk' with you. *How would you approach this situation?*

Suggestions

- There is clearly a developing situation here to do with boundaries and dependency
- You also have a potentially emotionally fragile young person
- You want to encourage her confidence in the University and the support it can offer but you want to resist becoming her main or only focus of support
- All staff should be clear of the remit of their role and what the relevant boundaries are, whether you are an Academic Tutor, School Administrator, Halls Manager or Librarian etc
- Do not be afraid to explain to the student in a friendly but clear manner, what the limits of your role are. Advise the student of the other options for support: Counselling and Mental Health Support Team, GP (if she has registered with a Doctor), access to PECS for periods of illness or distress

- If she continues to contact you – always give the same response – ‘this is what I deal with – this is where you can go for other support’
- Do not allow her to ‘drop in’ but ensure she arranges a meeting with you and outlines the reason for that meeting. If it is relevant to your role then meet with her, but ensure she understands how much time you can spend with her and be firm about finishing the meeting. If she strays into irrelevant areas, stop her and repeat the message of what your role is
- Ensure that any emails you send are always professional and relevant to your role
- If she becomes very persistent, you can discuss the issue with; your Line Manager, Director of Student Support & Wellbeing, Counselling and Mental Health Support Team Manager, Mental Health Practitioner
- If you become concerned for her safety or welfare or the safety of others, then you should certainly discuss this with someone

Case Study 6

Ahmed is a final year student. He has been exceptionally hard working throughout his 3 years and his academic performance has been consistently good. He engages with other students and appears to be very popular. In the first semester of his final year his work is not of the standard it has been previously – although still respectable. You have a conversation with him to try to determine why this is but he is positive and up-beat, indicating ‘lots on’, ‘working hard’ etc. A few days later two other students from the same cohort come to see you ‘in confidence’ to say they are concerned that he is taking drugs, he is in with a different group of friends – not students - and is ignoring his old friends and behaving out of character. *What would you do?*

Suggestions

- Do not automatically accept that what the other students are telling you is correct. Often students can misinterpret things
- Before taking any action, speak with other staff – check if there are concerns about attendance, behaviour, appearance.
- Talk with Student Support and Wellbeing to see if they are aware of the student and have any concerns
- Familiarise yourself with the University Misuse of Drugs Policy which is part of the Duty of Care Good Practice Guidelines
- Once you have undertaken this fact gathering exercise, if you have serious concerns about the student, meet with the two students who expressed their concerns and advise them that you are considering approaching the student and it may be necessary to raise with him what they have told you
- Give them the option of speaking with the student first to advise him that they have contacted the School because of their concerns. Advise them that if you do speak with the student you will need to explain to him where the information came from
- Arrange to meet the student with another member of staff – possibly someone from Student Support & Wellbeing. Outline your concerns about his changed performance etc and ask if there is any reason for this. If he divulges a serious drugs problem, talk with him about sources of support and referral – Counselling and Mental Health Support Team, GP. Encourage him to seek help with his problem. Advise him of the University Policy related to misuse of drugs. Make a note to this effect
- If he continues to indicate that all is fine then advise him of the information you have received and ask him to comment on this. Point out that the University has a Policy on Misuse of Drugs which indicates that if there is evidence of such taking place on campus or in residences then the University would have to take action, including involving the Police. Strongly encourage him to consider seeking support. Advise that you will continue to monitor the situation and may discuss again with Student Support and Wellbeing at a later date. Make a note of your conversation.
- If he emails you to continue the conversation in writing, be cautious in your response, ensure it is professional and relevant

Useful Links

Student Support Related Information Links

Student Support Documentation

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/staff/ssd/>

Duty of Care - Good Practice Guidelines

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/worddocuments/ssdocs/duty_of_care.doc

Student Handbook for 2010, given to all students at enrolment

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/5007/sspdf/studentguide.pdf>

A-Z of Student Survival – useful information and web links for students and staff. Covering Academic regulations, debt, meningitis, student finance etc.

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/studentaz/survival/>

2011 Student induction powerpoint

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/powerpoint/1082209/studentinduction2011.ppt>

2011 Student Finance Package for UK Students entering HE in 2011

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/powerpoint/1082209/finsupp11-12.ppt>

Funding implications for UK and EU students who withdraw, transfer, suspend studies 2010

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/stud_serv/sws/homeinfo/programme_change/?view=Standard

Keeping Healthy, Keeping Safe brochure – information on illness, GP and Hospital contacts

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/stud_serv/sws/swskhks/

University Equality and Diversity website including Single Equality Scheme

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/eqdiv/>

Student Support Strategy Links

Student Guidance – Good Practice Guidelines

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/worddocuments/ssdocs/StudentGuidanceproposal.doc>

Admissions Policy

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/brochure/courses/apply/uas/>

Student Regulations Handbook

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/uso/stud_reg_handbk/

Facts and Figures – Data related to student numbers and categories

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/eqdiv/data/?view=Standard>

Learning and Teaching Links

Learning and Teaching support site

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/lts/>

Term dates up to 2012

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/spa/dates/>

Assessment of Taught Programmes

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/assess/>

Learning and Teaching Conferences

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/conf/>

Learning & Teaching Academy – Development Resource for Academic Staff

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/academy/>

Learning & Teaching Academy Red Guides and Recap Guides – list of titles available

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/iteia/pubs/redandrecapguides/redguides/browseredguides/?view=Standard>

You may want to look at papers:

- + (3) Barriers to Learning – the DISABLED student perspective pedagogical practice
- + (4) Barriers to Learning – the INTERNATIONAL student perspective pedagogical practice
- + (5) Pedagogical Needs of Non Traditional Students
- + (9) Supervising Overseas Students' Dissertations
- + (18) Assessing Students: Cheating and Plagiarism
- + (21) Teaching Overseas Students
- + (29) Feedback: the Student Perspective
- + (32) Assessment for Learning: A Student Survival Guide: for students, by students
- + (34) Rethinking Feedback: an Assessment for Learning Perspective
- + (43) Creating presentable powerpoint presentations (including reference to students with dyslexia or who do not have English as their first language.
- + (50) Disruptive Student Behaviour
- + (54) Beyond text based plagiarism: A paradigm for tackling academic misconduct in the creative disciplines
- + (55) Collection of Teaching Tips/Advice to new higher education lecturers
- + (58) Peer Mentoring: What students want to know

University Staff Training

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/hr/std/>

Human Resources Staff Training and Development site