

## **Note re: Draft Responding to Distressed Students Protocol**

The following protocol document has been developed to create a brief reference guide to support members of the UCD Community in responding to students in distress.

During consultation, (e.g with the College & School Office Directors Group), the need for clear, concise guidance for staff who do not have expertise in student mental health, on what to do when a student presents in a distressed state or becomes distressed was highlighted as a priority.

As part of the broader review of the UCD Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy, a review of the existing protocol/procedures guidance was undertaken. This document is the output of two workshops, facilitated by UCD Agile and attended by the Heads of UCD's support services and other key stakeholders. It is also informed by reviews of approaches to equivalent protocols/guidance documents in other HEI's in Ireland and internationally, including the 'Red Folder' approach, adopted by several in the USA, HEI's (e.g. [Stanford](#), [University of Connecticut](#)). Guidance from the existing [UCD policy](#) and the UCD Counselling Service's guide to [Assisting Students in Distress](#), are also incorporated into this document. The service descriptions at the end of the document are taken from the draft Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy.

This document is not intended to be a comprehensive guide as detailed information about in relation to supporting students will still be available along with a suite of resources and training options for staff.

## RESPONDING TO DISTRESSED STUDENTS PROTOCOL

### R.E.D. : Recognise - Engage - Do

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. The information below will help you to respond.

Recognise	Engage	Do
<p><b>Note the signs that a student may be experiencing some difficulty:</b> Erratic or aggressive behaviour, appearing ill, upset or fatigued, repeated absences, (see list below).</p>	<p><b>Don't avoid the situation. Engage with the student to let them know you have concerns about their wellbeing and would like to help.</b></p>	<p><b>Help the student to initiate contact with the appropriate support.</b></p>
<p><b>Actions to take when responding to a student in distress: Is there an immediate danger to the student or others?</b></p>		
<p><b>No. The student is in some distress but can be supported through non-urgent channels.</b></p>	<p><b>No, but they require fast-tracked, priority support.</b></p>	<p><b>Yes, or I am unsure.</b></p>
<p><b>SIGNPOST TO SUPPORT FOR SELF REFERRAL</b></p>	<p><b>HELP THE STUDENT TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR PRIORITY SUPPORT</b></p>	<p><b>CALL FOR EMERGENCY SUPPORT</b></p>
<p>Signpost the student to supports available (see below).</p> <p>Access this page with them before they leave so the student engages with support.</p> <p>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 them.</p>	<p>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 codes/links below or make a priority referral on their behalf. Where possible, stay with, and accompany the student to the support service if they can be seen immediately.</p> <p>If you are unsure which support service is needed, contact their Student Adviser or a duty manager, Estate Services (01 716 7999) for guidance.</p>	<p><b>Call 01 716 7999</b> (UCD Estate Services – Duty Manager)*</p> <p>Stay with the student until assistance arrives.</p> <p>Always ensure your own safety.</p> <p>Consult with your manager or a colleague.</p> <p><i>*Estate Services have qualified first responders who will attend the scene and co-ordinate the arrival of emergency services to campus.</i></p>

If you find after the incident you are affected, staff should talk to your line manager or consider UCD HR Services (e.g. the UCD Employee Assistance Programme) and students should contact one of the student support services below.

## Recognising Signs of Distress:

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

Academic	Physical	Inter/Intrapersonal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpected change in academic performance e.g. lower grades, unexplained absences from classes, loss of motivation for academic work or participation in class</li> <li>• Essays or creative work that include disturbing content and/or themes of despair, hopelessness, suicide, violence, death, or aggression</li> <li>• Multiple requests for extensions or extenuating circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marked changes in physical appearance</li> <li>• Appears to be physically unwell for a period of time</li> <li>• Marked or noticeable change in mood or behaviour</li> <li>• Intoxication or under the influence of substances</li> <li>• Other behaviour that doesn't seem to match the context/setting</li> <li>• Signs of self harm, e.g. cuts/scars on arms and/or legs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct comments about distress, feelings of overwhelm, family problems, etc.</li> <li>• Signs/expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness, or shame</li> <li>• Sudden changes in emotions e.g. tearfulness, irritability, acute anxiety, expression of hopelessness about the future, exaggerated emotional responses</li> <li>• Behaviour that is unusual or unpredictable</li> <li>• Concern expressed by friends about a student</li> <li>• Implied or direct threats of harm to self/others</li> </ul>

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

<b>SAY</b> what you see & <b>SHOW</b> 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.	<p>"Hi _____, I just wanted to check in with you. I've noticed _____ and wanted to see if you'd like to talk."</p> <p>"Your wellbeing is important to me so I'd like to know how I can best support you at the moment"</p>
<b>HEAR</b> them out	Be there to listen. Listen patiently as you try to understand where they are coming from. Acknowledge their difficulty and instill hope that, with help, things can get better.	<p>"I'm sorry that you are going through this. Thank you for speaking to me about it, I know that can be hard."</p> <p>"It sounds like a very difficult situation, what has that been like for you?"</p>
<b>KNOW</b> <u>your role</u>	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"
<b>CONNECT</b> 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?"
<b>CHECK</b> 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"

<b>UCD on-campus supports:</b>		
<b>In an emergency, call 01 716 7999</b>		
<b>UCD Student Advisers</b>	Offers assistance when personal, financial or social difficulties arise, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support with college life</li> <li>• Advice on policies and procedures</li> <li>• Referral to other UCD supports</li> <li>• Support with financial concerns.</li> </ul>	<b>10am - 4pm (Core Hours)</b> <b>01 716 7120</b> <b><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/studentadvisers">www.ucd.ie/studentadvisers</a></b>
<b>UCD Student Counselling Service</b>	Provides support when personal issues arise which affect happiness, well-being, capacity to cope, relationships or learning.	<b>9:30am - 1pm</b> <b>2pm - 4:30pm</b> <b>01 716 3134</b> <b><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/studentcounselling">www.ucd.ie/studentcounselling</a></b>
<b>UCD Health Service</b>	Provides on-campus medical & psychiatric care, including where there is a concern for the health and wellbeing of a student.	<b>9:30am - 12pm</b> <b>2pm - 4:00pm</b> <b>01 716 3134</b> <b><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/stuhealth">www.ucd.ie/stuhealth</a></b>
<b>UCD Chaplaincy</b>	Provides pastoral care, emotional support & spiritual accompaniment for students of all faiths and none	<b>24/</b> <b>01 716 1971</b> <b><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/chaplaincy">www.ucd.ie/chaplaincy</a></b>
<b>UCD Access and Lifelong Learning</b>	Offers advice & supports to widen access & ensure participation by diverse student cohorts and supports students who require disability support, temporary exam accommodations, financial support, academic support & social support.	<b>10am - 4pm</b> <b>01 716 7123</b> <b><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/all">www.ucd.ie/all</a></b>
<b>Digital, telephone and out of hours supports and resources:</b>		
<b>Text About It (Spunout)</b>	Talk 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.	<b><a href="https://textaboutit.com">Text 'HELLO' to 50808</a></b>
<b>Togetherall</b>	Togetherall is a safe, anonymous, online community for mental health support which is free to all UCD students.	<b><a href="https://togetherall.com/en-ie/">https://togetherall.com/en-ie/</a></b>
<b>SilverCloud</b>	SilverCloud is a flexible, effective and easy to use online mental health support system that all UCD students have access to. SilverCloud grants students secure and immediate access to self-led Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	<b><a href="https://silvercloud.com">Silvercloud</a></b>
<b>Niteline</b>	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. Lines open 9pm - 2.30am.	<b>1800 793 793</b>
<b>EDOC</b>	Out of Hours Urgent Medical Care 6pm to 8am Monday to Friday or at any time (24 Hours) during weekends	<b>01 22 34 500</b>
<b>HSE Mental Health Supports and Services</b>	There are different types of support available for people with mental health difficulties. Many of the supports listed here are provided by agencies with the support of the HSE. You can access most of the services without a referral.	<b><a href="http://hse.ie">See hse.ie for mental health supports and services</a></b>