



BATH SPA UNIVERSITY STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bath Spa University's vision is 'to be a leading university in creativity, culture and enterprise. Through inspirational teaching and research, we transform students' lives'.¹ Appropriate policies are needed in order to ensure Bath Spa University is able to effectively enable and support any student with diverse needs.
- 1.2 It is widely accepted that universities have an important role in providing support to students with mental health difficulties. HEFCE data shows there has been a 132 per cent increase in the number of students declaring mental health issues between 2008/09 and 2012/13.
- 1.3 In February 2015 the Universities UK Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Working Group published a good practice guide to 'Student mental wellbeing in higher education'². This was in order to reflect the change in approaches to teaching and supporting students with mental health difficulties and the legislative framework since the previously published guidance in 2000³ and 2006.⁴
- 1.4 Bath Spa University is committed to supporting its students and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progress and student experience. Many students who experience mental health difficulties will manage these effectively with minimal support, but for some, for example students who have a diagnosed long term mental health condition, their mental health may have an adverse impact on their (and possibly others) ability to function and academic potential.
- 1.5 The University recognises there are a range of situational factors which may impact on a student's mental wellbeing and can result in a person becoming vulnerable. This Policy provides a framework to enable and facilitate the timely referral of any concern to the Student Support Service.
- 1.6 Under the Equality Act 2010 someone is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal day to day activities.⁵ However, Bath Spa understands that not all mental health conditions or difficulties constitute as a 'disability' under the Act.
- 1.7 Common mental health conditions experienced by students include anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), eating problems (anorexia / bulimia / bingeing), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, social phobia, psychosis,

¹ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/Media/university-governance/Strategy%202020.pdf>

² http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/StudentMentalWellbeingGuide.aspx#.VIhkAL_CYxl

³ Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), now UUK and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), now GuildHE, (2000). 'Guidelines on Student Mental Health Policies and Procedures for HE'

⁴ Grant, (2006a).

http://www.mwbhe.com/inc/files/documents/publications/mental_health_policy_framework.pdf

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

borderline personality disorder (BPD), self-harm and suicidal ideation. Bath Spa recognises that not all students will have received an official diagnosis from a GP and such conditions may develop whilst a student is at university.

1.8 The university environment can be an exciting and stimulating one, and can make a positive contribution to mental wellbeing in that it:

- Provides a structured and purposeful environment;
- Provides opportunities for academic and personal achievement leading to a fuller sense of identity and increased self-esteem;
- Offers the opportunity to learn to manage multiple demands and build confidence;
- Opens up new global networks studying alongside students from other countries;
- Can reduce isolation and provide opportunities for new friendships;
- Provides opportunities for exercise, creativity and community involvement and contribution.

1.9 In studying at university, students may also need to be adaptable and respond to new challenges, including:

- Living away from family and existing friends;
- Moving to a new area or country;
- Experiencing a range of different cultures;
- Learning new languages;
- Getting used to different modes of learning, teaching and assessment, and professional requirements;
- Managing a budget;
- Balancing study with being a parent or carer, or with part-time or full-time employment;
- Making the transition from home to university local health providers and support services.

2. Aims

2.1 The aim of this policy is to provide:

- A clear, transparent and practical policy framework relating to student mental health and wellbeing, for students, potential students (and their supporters), and staff working with students at Bath Spa University
- A consistent approach throughout the University to ensure no student is academically or socially discriminated against because of a mental health condition.

2.2 To act as a supplement to other University policies, particularly the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for students.

3. The regulatory and legal framework:

- Bath Spa University has a duty of care⁶ to meet students' educational needs and to take reasonable steps to protect their health, safety and welfare. The nature of the duty of care may be enhanced where the student has an identified vulnerability such as a mental health condition or is an international student. The duty of care extends to all students, so an individual's needs may have to be balanced against the needs of the wider University population.
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement⁷.
- Statutory legislation includes; Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 1998, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Coroner's and Justice Act 2009.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 & Prevent Duty 2015: Higher Education Providers must have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' and have robust measures in place to identify and support 'vulnerable individuals'.⁸

4. Pre-admission and admission

- 4.1 Bath Spa University is committed to admissions processes that are equitable for all applicants.⁹ Applications from prospective students, (including International, EU, Erasmus and other exchange programmes) who have disclosed a mental health condition are therefore considered in the same way as any other application.
- 4.2 Applicants are encouraged to disclose a mental health condition on their UCAS/GTTR or BSU application form, to enable the University to assess their academic access needs and requirements.
- 4.3 On receipt of an applicant's disclosure and following an offer being made, the University's Student Support Service will send an Academic Access Requirement Questionnaire via email, (a variety of accessible formats are available on request). This requests further details about a student's mental health condition and may result in further action and advice, such as an informal visit to discuss support needs, discussion about what services are available both within the University and through local health agencies and application for DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance) as appropriate.

⁶ AMOSSHE: responding to student mental health issues: 'Duty of Care' responsibilities for student services in higher education (2001)

⁷ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/uk-quality-code-for-higher-education-chapter-b4-enabling-student-development-and-achievement#.VdCEzZfzPJE>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

⁹

<https://thehub.bathspa.ac.uk/Media/Student%20Services/Admissions%20procedure%20for%20disabled%20applicants.pdf>

4.4 The University's Mental Health Support Coordinator is identified to applicants as their key point of contact to discuss their transition and transfer of support or treatment.

4.5 All applicants for professional courses, such as PGCE, are required to complete a Fitness to Teach questionnaire as part of the application process which is assessed by the University's Medical Officer.

5. Entry and induction

5.1 All new students who disclose a mental health condition (or other disability) at application are invited to attend BSU Get Started. This annual event (the week before Freshers), facilitated by Student Support and University Peer Mentors, aims to help new students with the transition to university, through a combination of structured workshops and orientation activities.¹⁰

5.2 Students are given a further opportunity to make a disclosure when registering with the University – an electronic process via the student Portal and are encouraged throughout their time at Bath Spa.

6. Accommodation

6.1 The accommodation application asks about any specific requirements based on medical or disability. Students are required to evidence their requirements and the University makes every effort to meet such requests.¹¹

6.2 With students' permission, information relating to their support needs will be shared with Resident Tutors (RTs). The RTs receive regular training and briefings with Student Support staff about mental health difficulties and how this may impact on behaviours or be perceived by others.

6.3 All students are bound by licence agreements and the associated behavioural contracts.¹²

7. On course

7.1 Academic Access Plans, AAPs

7.1.1 Student Support is responsible for informing academic tutors of AAPs for all disabled students, including those who have disclosed a mental health condition.¹³

7.1.2 The AAP contains a description of the disclosed condition and any recommendations, including adjustments and exam arrangements¹⁴ which will enable the student to access the

¹⁰ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/study-with-us/giving-you-support/disability-and-dyslexia/headstart>

¹¹ <https://thehub.bathspa.ac.uk/services/housing/new-students/options>

¹² <https://thehub.bathspa.ac.uk/services/housing/current-students/newton-park>

¹³ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/Media/student%20support/AAPs.pdf>

learning environment. AAPs are shared with tutors on a strictly need to know basis and with each student's permission.

- 7.1.3 Student Support advises and provides guidance for academic staff when adjustments are being planned and during implementation.
- 7.1.4 A range of student and staff development and briefings are delivered and available online about a variety of conditions and disabilities, including mental health.¹⁵

7.2 Exchange programmes and placements

- 7.2.1 The University works to encourage its students to engage in placements, EU and international exchange programmes and field trips etc. Bath Spa recognises students with mental health conditions may require assistance with liaison and information sharing (in accordance with Data Protection¹⁶ and Confidentiality Policy¹⁷) with 'host' institutions and placement providers in order for them to participate. Student Support works with Academics and other Professional Services staff to facilitate this.

7.3 When a student becomes unwell, or there is concern about someone's wellbeing

- 7.3.1 There can be a variety of reasons why a student may experience a period of mental ill-health or be deemed as vulnerable. Guidance is in place for staff when responding to concerns, including crisis interventions and Appendix Three contains a referral form for staff to pass on concerns to Student Support.¹⁸
- 7.3.2 It is the responsibility of all University staff to pass on any concerns they have about the wellbeing of a student to Student Support. Students who are concerned about another student are encouraged to speak with Student Support, a tutor or the Students' Union to seek advice and guidance.
- 7.3.3 If a student's mental health condition impacts on their academic progress, they can make a formal submission to the University through the mitigating circumstances procedure.¹⁹ This enables the University to give flexibility (including deadlines and re-submissions etc.) without detriment to grades or progression in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations.²⁰

¹⁴ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/study-with-us/giving-you-support/disability-and-dyslexia/special-exam-arrangments>

¹⁵ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/study-with-us/giving-you-support/emotional-and-mental-health-support>

¹⁶ <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/regulations/data-protection>

¹⁷ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/study-with-us/giving-you-support/disclosure-and-confidentiality>

¹⁸

<http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/Media/student%20support/Student%20Mental%20Health%20Guidance%20for%20Staff.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://thehub.bathspa.ac.uk/services/student-services/student-information-desk>

²⁰ <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/regulations/academic-regulations>

7.3.4 The University, through Student Support, will work with students to help them access appropriate support, including treatment and will assist with arranging a break from study, including intercalation (maximum of one academic year) if necessary.

7.4 Fitness to Study Policy²¹

7.4.1 The Fitness to Study Policy is used in situations where the health or other personal circumstances of a student give rise to serious concern.

7.4.2 These concerns may be about their ability to benefit from and participate in University life, or that their participation gives rise to a concern of risk, including of harm to self or others or of behaviour that is a significant nuisance or disruption to others.

7.4.3 The Policy provides a structured framework to assess risk, monitor and review interventions, support offered and to identify and consider options.

7.4.4 The Policy gives all parties (internal and external) a structured point of reference and clearly maps their responsibilities and expectations.

²¹ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/quality-and-standards/a-z> (Policy under review, August 15)

Appendix One

Guidance for Staff: Student Mental Health

Tutors and frontline staff are often the first point of contact for a student experiencing distress and will also be alert to changes in student's behaviour, which may indicate a problem and a need for intervention.

These guidelines are to give practical and general guidance for staff; where there is concern a student may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

1. In determining whether someone is experiencing mental health distress and if it is necessary and/or appropriate for you to consider taking action, it may be useful to think about the following:
 - Has the student told you they have a problem?
 - Has someone else expressed concern, such as another student or colleague?
 - Have there been any significant changes in the student's appearance, such as sudden weight loss/gain or decline in personal hygiene?
 - Do they smell or sound different, e.g. can you smell alcohol, or is their speech very loud/quiet?
 - Have you noticed a difference in the mood of the student over a sustained period compared with how they are usually?
 - Have you noticed a change in their behaviour, such as being uncharacteristically withdrawn in class or absent, being inappropriate relative to the situation or not completing work?

It is important to note that we all may experience one or more of these factors at any given time and that none in isolation indicate a mental health difficulty. The fact that some of the above factors may be present might suggest a need for greater concern, investigation or to seek advice from Student Support.

2. What you can do if you are concerned

- Try not to avoid the situation or pretend nothing is wrong, as this could make the situation worse, or result in it lasting for longer.
- Approach the student in an empathetic and understanding way. Remember to be sensitive to issues relating to sexuality, race, religion, culture and gender.
- Just by asking the student how they are may give them the opportunity to discuss their concerns with you – they might only want a listening ear.
- Be prepared to listen and give some time if you are able to. If there are constraints on your time, tell the student this at the start and consider arranging a different time.
- By being open and honest with the student in your initial contact will help to develop a level of trust between you. A student might often avoid seeking help because of concerns about the consequences of telling someone.
- Whilst you should usually try to get the student's consent before sharing confidential information with someone else, if you are unsure on how to help the student you can contact Student Support, in confidence.

- Try not to offer help that is beyond your role. We all have something to offer, but it is critical we are aware of our boundaries, what we can realistically and are qualified to do. It is not your responsibility to solve the student's problem.
- The student may not always identify that they have a problem, or may not want to acknowledge it. Try not to humour them by pretending there isn't a problem if it is clear to you there is.
- How you respond to your concerns will largely depend on your assessment of their situation. The key consideration is the safety and well-being of the student and those around them.

3. When a student does not want to talk

- If the student is not ready to accept help or talk about their problem, do not ask insensitive or intrusive questions. Respect the right of the student if they do not wish to discuss things. Offer them an open invitation to come back and talk to you in the future.
- However, if you are still concerned about a student who has refused help, speak to your line-manager or Student Support.

4. When a student does want to talk

- If the student does discuss their problem with you, be wary of giving advice that is beyond the boundaries of your role. Rather, listen and encourage the student to seek the appropriate help – you can always make the referral, or initial contact, (with their permission) for them.
- Do express your concern, but remember your role is not as a therapist.²² Consult with Student Support for advice on what to do or encourage the student to make contact with SS or their GP.

5. Dealing with crisis situations

Whilst very rare, there may be instances where a student's behaviour gives serious cause for concern. Such situations will vary, from concern being raised because a student has indicated they are experiencing suicidal ideation, to exhibitions of bizarre or random behaviour, which raises concern that the student or others may be at risk²³.

In all crisis situations, assuring your safety and that of others, including the individual is paramount. The following notes may help:

- Try to remain and appear calm and adopt a non-threatening approach.
- If there are other students nearby, calmly ask them to leave the area.
- Some situations can be distressing – if you do not feel confident to approach the student, then go and get help.

²² If you are a qualified therapist, be mindful that is not the role you are employed in at BSU and it is not appropriate for you to take that stance with a student. You should refer the student on to the appropriate service.

²³ For the purposes of this guidance, 'risk' is meant as any danger to an individual's (or the University's) safety.

- Ensure appropriate people are contacted, such as your line-manager, Student Support/Student Services, Security, first aider.
- If there is serious concern about the individual do not hesitate to call the emergency services – paramedics or police.

6. Staff support and consultancy sessions

The Student Support Service can advise staff on good practice and referral while respecting the confidentiality of students and staff. We can also offer drop-in consultancy sessions for individual staff members and groups.

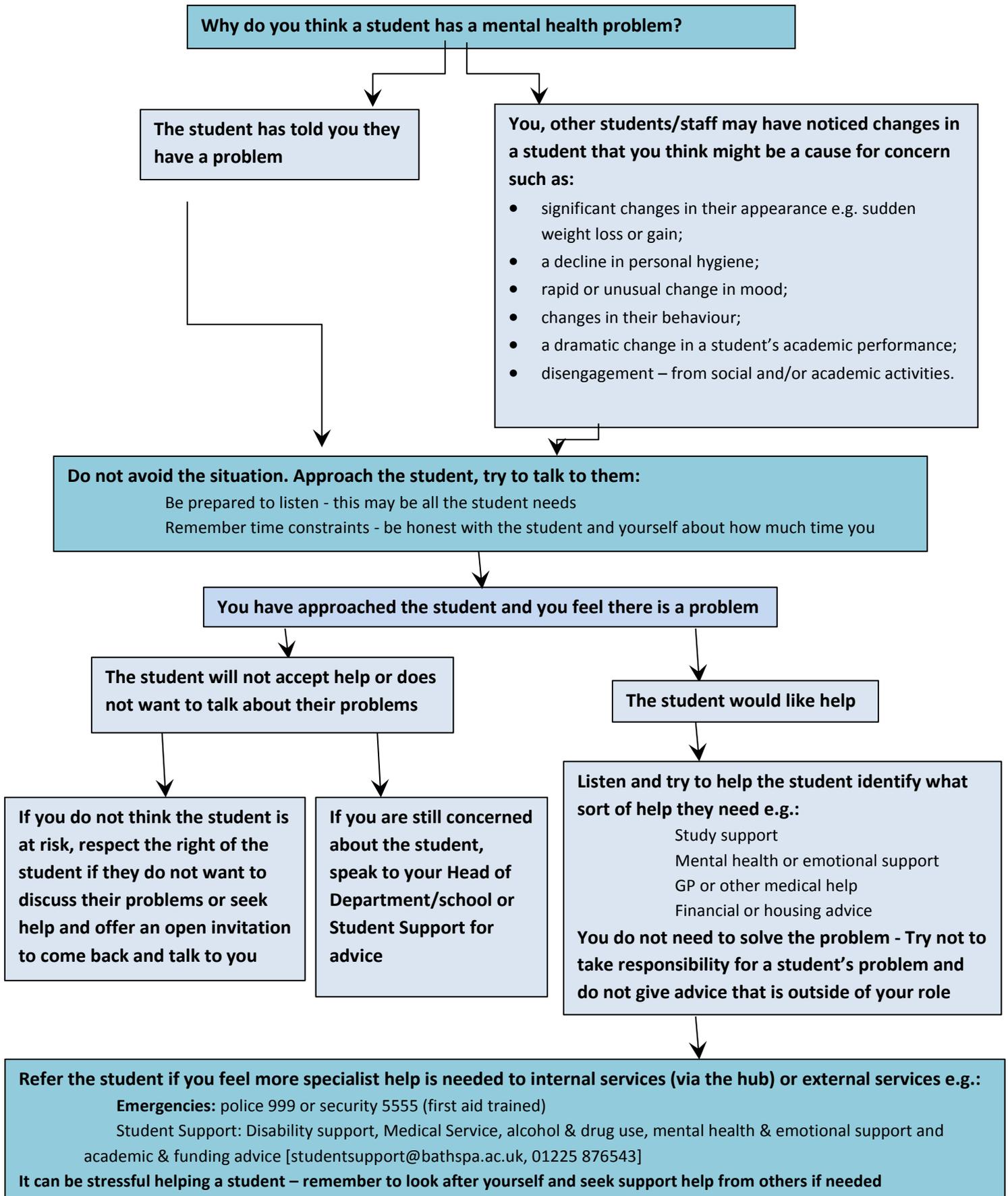
The consultancy sessions offer a confidential environment outside of the formal management structure to give staff an opportunity to think about and discuss:

- Relationships with students
- Challenges in their work with students
- Possible stress-points
- Good practice
- Problem solving.

The sessions will be facilitated by a specialist Student Support Advisor.

Appendix Two

Practical guidelines for staff supporting students with possible mental health problems



Appendix 3

Referral form to raise concern about a student's wellbeing: Return to Student Support:
studentsupport@bathspa.ac.uk

Student name	
Student ID no	
Your name	
Your email	
Explain why concern is being raised	
Any other information	

Appendix 4

Practical guidelines for students

