

Guidelines for postgraduates who teach: Student pastoral support

Role

To enhance the learning experience of students in your teaching activities as outlined in QA9 and provide effective signposting to support services.

The Director of Studies (Taught Provision) is responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching and teaching-related activity undertaken by students.

Engaging with students you teach

You have no formal pastoral care responsibilities, but you may find that students you teach want to talk about an issue that is affecting them. If this happens, you should:

- Listen, acknowledge their feelings and signpost to services
- Do not promise complete confidentiality. If you think there is a risk to the student or others, you should contact Student Services for advice
- Inform your departmental teaching contact of the conversation/meeting
- Confirm any agreed actions in an email to the student, copied to your departmental teaching contact
- The departmental teaching contact will then record on SAMIS Student Notes any significant interactions
- Contact **4321** if you are worried

Some of the students you teach might have a Disability Access Plan (DAP) and may require reasonable adjustments to their teaching and learning environment. Talk to your Unit Convenor or other departmental teaching contact as you plan your teaching to find out whether there are any adjustments that need to be made.

If you are concerned about a student's lack of attendance or engagement, discuss with your departmental teaching contact and they will follow guidance on attendance:

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/student-records/procedures.html>

Confidentiality

If you are contacted by parents or friends who are worried about a student, listen to and acknowledge their concerns, but no information must be disclosed to third parties without the consent of the student. See Guidance on Student Confidentiality.

Pastoral care

As you know from your own experience, students have lives outside university and sometimes events can impact on their capacity to study. Pastoral care means providing information, guidance and support, not counselling.

Remember these 5 steps:

Recognise

Be alert to any worries that students may have. Notice changes in performance, behaviour or appearance but be careful not to make assumptions – there can be many reasons for such changes. Take seriously any concerns raised by other students, colleagues or parents, bearing in mind confidentiality requirements.

If in doubt about whether concern is warranted, please contact your departmental teaching contact or Student Services on 4321 for guidance.

Respond

When talking with a student, listen to what they tell you and reflect back what you understand. Acknowledge the feelings behind what they have told you but be clear about the boundaries of your role.

Take your time in considering how best to address the student's needs and refer to your departmental teaching contact and the Information for Staff resources for guidance. If the student is distressed or behaving strangely refer to the Distressed Student fact sheet for guidance and inform your departmental teaching contact or Director of Studies (Taught Provision).

Refer

Check whether the student is already seeing Student Services or a GP and if they are, encourage them to make contact. If not, it is useful to refer the student to 4 West Student Services Wellbeing Drop-In. This runs every day of the year and no appointment is needed.

If the student refuses to seek help despite your encouragement we are not able to force them to seek help, but if you think there is a risk to the student or to others you must contact Student Services (4321) for advice (after hours ring Security on 666).

Reflect

It is useful to reflect periodically on how we might improve our capacity to support the student experience. Remember the old adage 'Nosce te ipsum' - know thyself, including your prejudices and 'buttons'. Additional training such as Mental Health First Aid is available.

Here are some helpful hints for preventing student problems:

- Help students to feel that they 'belong' and incorporate inclusive teaching and learning strategies in your practice
- Ask your Unit Convenor whether any of your students require disability related adjustments
- Read Student Services staff guides
- Encourage students to seek help early
- Be accessible to students but manage the boundaries of your role, asking for guidance and support from your departmental teaching contact where needed
- Satisfaction = Experience - Expectations
- Remember that often, all you need to do is listen.

Recording your meetings

Record brief notes on any meetings with students. You will not be expected to undertake pastoral meetings on your own, but your notes can help colleagues build a picture of the student's situation. This will:

- Ensure coordination of pastoral care
- Reduce risks to the student and the institution
- Provide a record of our services to students to use in investigating complaints etc.
- Help you and/or colleagues remember key issues when you next see them

It is good practice (and less work) to document the meeting in the form of an email to the student, copied to your departmental teaching contact, which they can then paste into the Student Notes system. This approach is very transparent to the student and reinforces any actions that you have agreed, avoiding any misunderstandings later.



- Record summary of situation, outcomes and action plan
- Be succinct and use non-judgemental language
- Record facts rather than your opinions, actual behaviours not your interpretation
- Bear in mind that the student may request to see your notes.

Resources

Services for students -
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/advice-and-support-to-help-you-succeed/>

Staff information page -
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/collections/student-services-advice-for-staff/>



If in doubt call the Student Services Staff Advice Line on
01225 384321