



Signs and indicators that a student might be struggling

[Guidance for any member of staff at the University of Bath](#)

In many cases, a student who is struggling may feel able to tell a member of staff and/or ask for help. However, not everyone will ask for help; some students might not realise there is a problem or even that help is available from the University.

In fact, there is lots of help available; the University of Bath is proud of our support and we strive for a culture of care as a key component of our institutional strategy. In any case, we want staff to know that you do not have to provide the level of support a student might require on your own.

This guidance is about the signs a student might be struggling. It gives suggestions to any member of the University of Bath community (staff and students) about what to do next – which is about helping rather than fixing.



Indicators

Repeated non-attendance or sudden unexplained absences from timetabled sessions or arranged meetings	Repeated missed deadlines, extensions or IMCs	Appearing to isolate themselves in study areas and engage less with their classmates/peers
Sudden decline in academic/extra-curricular performance, e.g. lower marks than usual or sports performance	A pattern of disengagement, for instance missing all lab sessions or oral presentations	A sudden unexplained change in behaviour, for instance less talkative than usual or speaking erratically/less coherently than normal
Appearing visibly distressed or upset; seeming tired or distracted, more than usual	Signs of poor self-care or looking dishevelled; sudden weight gain or loss	Increased dependence on you, e.g. making excessive appointments
Not replying to emails	Avoiding talking to you or engaging with conversation	Failing to attend 1-1 appointments e.g. Careers

Causes for concern

Whilst the above indicators could be a sign of a concern, there may not be an underlying problem. So, the best way to find out is to ask the student how they are, explain what you've noticed and find out if you can help.



What to do next?

If a student is visibly in distress, refer to this guidance [Supporting students in distress](http://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/supporting-students-in-distress/) (www.bath.ac.uk/guides/supporting-students-in-distress/). If not, these are some options to consider:

- Thank them for reaching out to you, show empathy and belief, e.g. “thanks for coming to talk to me about this today. What I’m hearing is.....is that correct? Would you like to explore some options together about what you could do next?”
- If you’re a member of academic staff, can you offer any flexibility with their studies, e.g. an extension or adjustment?
- Suggest they contact Disability Services for advice
- If you’re unsure what support they might need or who is available, signpost them to Student Support Helpdesk in the Roper Student Support Centre (4W) or the support directory www.bath.ac.uk/topics/support-directory/
- If you work in Accommodation, could you encourage them to socialise with their flatmates?
- Encourage them to visit the Students’ Union if they are feeling bored, lonely or struggling with the transition to university www.thesubath.com/
- If they could be unwell, including mental health difficulties, suggest they contact their GP
- If they might be being bullied or have experienced harassment, they could report this to the University online www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/support-and-report/
- Encourage them to reach out to their support network, e.g. friends or family

Remember to make a note, e.g. on SAMIS, of what you’ve observed and the action you’ve taken

What if... the student doesn’t want you to do anything or tell anyone

That’s OK, that’s their choice. However, if there is a risk of harm* to them or someone else, you must still contact Student Support and Safeguarding and let the team know what is happening – phone on [4321](tel:4321) or email studentsupport@bath.ac.uk. You can do this without the student’s consent; Student Support can talk to you about the student without knowing their name initially, and provide general advice about a way forward.

**Risk of harm’ could include a suggestion they are self-harming or unable to keep themselves safe, a mental health difficulty (such as an eating disorder); could also include behaviour that could endanger others, threats against someone else and harm by someone else to the student.*

What if... the situation doesn’t improve

You can ask the student again if something is wrong. They may not be used to talking or seeking help, but we know that the sooner someone accesses support the sooner they can get back on track with their studies and student life. If you remain concerned, give Student Support a call – [4321](tel:4321) – and the team there can contact the student or support you with a way forward.