

## Data Privacy

The University respects a student's right to privacy and actively seeks to preserve the privacy rights of those who share personal information (also known as personal data) with the University. Under GDPR Health Data qualifies as one of the **Special Categories** of Personal Data. The requirements and safeguards that apply to processing Health Data are greater than those that apply to General Data. See University [GDPR](http://ucc.ie/en/gdpr/) website at: [ucc.ie/en/gdpr/](http://ucc.ie/en/gdpr/)

## Information Sharing

Staff to whom a student has disclosed information regarding their mental health may judge it in the student's interests, or in the interests of others, to share that information with other staff or other 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, either to seek advice, arrange supports or report concerns. In such circumstances:

Obtain the student's explicit consent to share information by explaining:

- the reasoning behind the decision to share the information
- the identity and role of person(s) with whom the information will be shared
- an outline of the information that is to be disclosed

Should the student withhold consent to the sharing of information:

- consider sharing the information or seeking advice on a no-name basis
- consider sharing the information without the student's explicit consent if you judge the situation may be urgent/emergency where the student may be a risk to self or a risk to others (as per Flow-Chart on page 3 of this Desktop Guide)
- If you judge that there may be concerns as to a student's Fitness to Practise or Fitness to Continue in Study, consider sharing information that solely relates to the actions and/or incapacity that is causing concern, whilst not sharing any of the student's Health Data

## Communication and Record-Keeping

Communications and discussions relating to a student's mental health should be conducted discreetly. It is good practice to keep brief notes of any discussions with or about students where there has been guidance or decisions in relation to personal issues, and to inform the student that you are making a record of the encounter. Fax communication and electronic communication via internet, social-media platforms, e-mail or SMS and Instant Messaging may lead to unintended accidental distribution to person(s) other than the intended recipient(s) and caution is advised in their use.

## Contact Phone Numbers

Student Counselling and Development		4903565
Student Health Department		4902311
UCC General Services Security	24 Hours	4903111
An Garda Síochána Anglesea Street HQ	24 Hours	4313031
A+E Cork University Hospital	24 Hours	4920230

# **STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH: POLICY FOR STAFF**

## **DESKTOP SUMMARY AND GUIDE**

### **Purpose**

This guide is a summary of some of the key elements of University College Cork's **Student Mental Health: Policy For Staff**. It is intended to be used as a quick guide. The full version of the Policy<sup>1</sup> should be consulted when further detail is required.

### **Statement of intent**

University College Cork is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in education and aims to support all students including those with mental health difficulties.

### **UCC's responsibility and commitment**

University College Cork acknowledges its responsibility to ensure its policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of those students with mental health difficulties or in mental distress or experiencing a mental illness. University College Cork commits to provide a supportive environment and to develop services complementary to the services provided in the community.

### **Mental Health, Mental Distress and Mental illness**

Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Mental Distress is defined as the state of having troubling, unpleasant and distressing emotional experiences, but not persisting and enduring to the extent and for the duration experienced by a person with a mental illness. A mental illness affects a person's thinking, perceiving, emotion or judgment and may impair the mental function of the person to the extent that he or she requires care or medical treatment in his or her own interest or in the interest of the safety of other persons. Students may experience periods of mental distress or mental illness during their time at University and require extra support. Most of these will recover to previous levels of wellbeing.

For information purposes the clinical features of some common mental illnesses are described in the full version of the Mental Health Policy.

### **Sources of support for students**

The support networks available to a student vary from individual to individual and according to whether they are still residing at home with family or living away from home. An extensive range of support services for students within and outside UCC is listed in Appendix to the Student Mental Health: Policy for Staff<sup>1</sup>

1. Full Policy Available at: [www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/se-policies/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/se-policies/)

## Tips for staff in helping a student in distress

The following is intended as advice and guidance only.

- Consider consulting a colleague or professional before approaching the student.
- Remain as calm as possible.
- Assure the student that help is available.
- Give the student time to talk.
- Try to understand the situation from their point of view.
- Be sympathetic and not dismissive.
- Speak to the student in a straight forward manner.
- Make the student aware of your concern and the basis for your concern.
- Point out the specific behaviours/indicators that have led to your concern.
- If the student refuses to accept that there is a problem, and you do not believe that there is risk of harm to themselves or others, you must accept their decision.
- Seek the student's consent before speaking about their situation with anyone.
- You could consider seeking advice from Student Services on a no-name basis
- In urgent or emergency situations you may need to proceed without the student's consent. See Page 3 of this Desktop Guide: **Information Sharing**

## Tips for staff in dealing with a crisis or urgent situation

A crisis may occur if a student's usual coping mechanisms become overwhelmed.

- Consider consulting a colleague or professional before approaching the student.
- Consider your own safety if arranging a meeting. Remain as calm as possible.
- Consider informing your line manager if there is/has been a crisis situation.
- Do not be afraid to ask the student if they have contemplated harming themselves. Check if they have an actual plan to carry this out.
- Ask if they are already attending UCC Student Health Department or Student Counselling & Development Department, GP or Psychiatrist Ask for the details and obtain consent to contact the relevant services.
- If a student discloses that he/she is at risk of harming him/herself or others you have a duty of care.
- Contact the service, explaining your concerns, requesting immediate help/intervention and confirm an appointment.
- Where possible consider accompanying the student to the appointment.

## Support for staff

It can be emotionally draining to deal with students in distress.

If you feel you need additional personal support consider contacting UCC's external **Employee Assistance Provider**: Tel. **1800-817-435**. Staff should consider availing of the bespoke training course "**Responding to Students in Distress**".

Contact Student Counselling and Development Department on Tel. no. **3565**

## Actions Advised in Helping a Student in Distress or in Crisis

**Staff member concerned about mental health of student**

**If the Student is Armed or Very Threatening or Very Aggressive**  
 Call Gardai (0) 112 or (0) 999  
 Inform UCC Security 3111

**Life Threatening Emergency**

Overdose Possible or Definite:  
 Request Ambulance 999 or 112  
 Inform UCC Security 3111  
 Inform Student Health 2311

**Non-Urgent**

If the student seeks help or:

- Is withdrawn, low in mood, tearful or unduly anxious, or shows unusual academic deterioration **and**
- Does not display features considered as Urgent/Emergency (see over)

**Urgent/Emergency**

If the student is or appears

- Suicidal/ wishing they were dead
- Reporting self-harm or threatening harm to others
- Expressing bizarre thoughts or ideas which are out of touch with reality
- Unduly agitated or behaving in a bizarre manner

- Explain your concerns to student.
- Advise and encourage the student to contact Student Counselling, Student Health Department, or their own GP or Psychiatrist.
- Arrange follow up appointment.
- If a student does not wish to follow your advice, their wishes should be respected.
- You may wish to discuss your concerns at this stage on a no-name basis with Student Counselling or Student Health
- Further action is appropriate at any stage where their condition or situation deteriorates to become Urgent or Emergency as over.
- Keep record of incident/ response

- If possible consult colleague: Do not act alone
- Explain concerns to student unless you believe this will inflame the situation.
- Seek consent to contact Student Counselling and Development, Student Health Department, or Student's own GP or Psychiatrist.
- If consent withheld consider contacting anyway.
- Arrange an urgent appointment with one of the professional services listed above.
- Accompanying student to appt. if possible.
- Consider A+E/SouthDoc/An Garda Siochana if other services unavailable or closed.
- If off-campus or overseas consider contacting host university/institution, local health services, An Garda Siochana or local Police and request advice or assistance.
- Keep record of incident/ response

**Consider if the student may have breached Student Rules, and/or if Fitness to Continue in Study, or Fitness to Practise Polices need to be invoked, and contact relevant personnel to discuss**