Supporting Students in Distress

Response Guide for Faculty and Staff

At times, you’ve probably noticed students who seem to be in distress. You may have worried about them and hoped they’re getting the help they need — but not known whether you can or should do anything about it.

Your observations and actions can help connect students to the many available resources at SFU.

Together we can build a more supportive campus community.

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Health and Counselling Services (HCS)
Monday to Friday 9 AM – 4:30 PM
Phone: 778-782-4615
www.sfu.ca/students/health
Contact us for advice. If you are calling from Surrey or Vancouver campus, please say so. There are options specific to those campuses.

Campus Public Safety
Available 24/7
Phone: 778-782-4500
CPS staff provide immediate response, support and assessment of the situation. CPS may offer advice, coordinate with appropriate SFU campus or external resources, or engage 911 if emergency services are required.

Vancouver Crisis Line
Available 24/7
Distress Line: 604-872-3311
www.youthinbc.com
www.crisiscentre.bc.ca

Student Conduct Office
Phone: 778-782-9456
www.sfu.ca/students/studentconduct
Contact the SCO about students exhibiting concerning behaviour. This office will provide advice to faculty and staff and will also intervene and coordinate appropriate supports for students. The SCO is also responsible for implementing the Student Conduct Policy (S.10.05) and will look into matters and conduct the appropriate follow up with students and impacted parties.

Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office (SVSPO)
Phone: 778-782-7233
www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence
A trauma informed and survivor-centered service which offers support to campus community members impacted by sexual violence and misconduct, regardless of when or where the incident took place. Offers confidential support, information and referrals at any SFU campus or alternate location. The SVSPO also provides educational programming and initiatives.

My SSP (Student Support Program)
Phone: 1-844-451-9700
(011-416-380-6978 from outside N. America)
Download free ‘My SSP’ App from Apple store or Google Play
24/7 free, confidential counselling support available by phone and chat for all SFU students (graduate and undergraduate). Call to book multiple session in-person, phone or video appointments. Language options available.

More SFU Mental Health Support Information
www.sfu.ca/mental-health

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Emergency
If a student exhibits behaviour that poses an immediate threat to themselves or others call:
• 911
• Campus Public Safety 778-782-4500
Take seriously any reference to attempting suicide, regardless of the context. Consult Campus Public Safety or HCS immediately.

Connect with us
www.sfu.ca/students/distress-response-guide

Revised version 2019
This Response Guide is intended to help you identify, and potentially assist, students in distress. You don’t need to take on the role of a counsellor, but you can play a key role in connecting students with resources and support. You’ll find more information, including professional development opportunities, at www.sfu.ca/students/sid.

### Observations that might prompt you to have a conversation with a student
- Other students, faculty or staff express concern for the student
- A student says (or writes) something that makes you think they are unusually unhappy or angry
- You have a sense that the student is struggling with something
- You notice specific behaviours of concern, including chronic absenteeism

### Connect with the student
- If appropriate, talk to the student privately about what you have seen and express your concern
- Focus on the specific behaviour(s) you have observed
- Be patient and allow the student to speak freely
- Avoid giving advice
- If the student is agitated, consider having someone else present (or nearby), or call Campus Security

#### Confidentiality
If you seek advice, you are acting in the best interest of the student. In most cases, you won’t be required to identify the student. Under BC’s Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, you can provide identifying details to fellow employees of SFU in situations that could affect anyone’s health or safety.

### Support for you
Please take care of yourself and seek the support you need. In an emergency situation, you can receive personal support in Health and Counselling Services. You may also have access to the Employee and Family Assistance program (EFAP): www.sfu.ca/human-resources.

### Observe and check-in
Here are some examples of behaviours you may observe, and questions you might ask. If you are unsure, ask for advice.

#### Observations that might prompt you

- You notice specific behaviours of concern, including chronic absenteeism
- You have a sense that the student is struggling with something
- A student says (or writes) something that makes you think they are unusually unhappy or angry
- Other students, faculty or staff express concern for the student

#### Connect with the student

- If you notice specific behaviours of concern, include chronic absenteeism
- You feel safe to ask questions

### Support and resources
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### Support for students in distress
- **Moderate to severe concern:** You might have noticed a specific behaviour, for example:
  - Repeated requests for special consideration
  - Changes in dress/hygiene
  - Changes in social behaviour

- **Severe concern:** You might have noticed a specific behaviour, for example:
  - Suspected drug/alcohol misuse
  - Behaviour that is violent, destructive or threatening to self or others

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### Observe and check-in
Here are some examples of behaviours you may observe, and questions you might ask. If you are unsure, ask for advice.

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#### If the student’s response suggests:

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<td>- that they are having personal or relationship problems, academic concerns, depression or anxiety</td>
<td>- that they may have experienced sexual assault or another traumatic event</td>
<td>- the student may be a threat or risk to self or others</td>
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<td>- Focus on the specific behaviour(s) you have observed</td>
<td>- that they may be having suicidal thoughts</td>
<td>Call 911</td>
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<td>- Be patient and allow the student to speak freely</td>
<td>- that they are having difficulty coping but there is not an urgent concern of harm to self or others</td>
<td>If you judge that the student is at imminent risk of attempting suicide, do not leave them alone</td>
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<td>- Avoid giving advice</td>
<td>- Encourage the student to seek immediate counselling support, but don’t insist.</td>
<td>Call 911 and if at SFU also call Campus Public Safety at 778-782-4500 to help direct emergency services.</td>
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<td>- If the student is agitated, consider having someone else present (or nearby), or call Campus Security</td>
<td>- Provide and/or refer them to other services, such as:</td>
<td>For sexual assault support, see <a href="http://www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence">www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence</a> and help the student find information on their options for support and referrals.</td>
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