

A staff guide to supporting students at Victoria



**JUST
DOING
OUR JOB**

NOTE:

The purpose of this guide is to provide information for staff at Victoria University. While every endeavour has been made to ensure the information contained in the Guide is accurate, the University does not accept any responsibility or liability for errors or omissions, which may be contained in the guide or on any websites referenced. Further, matters covered in the guide are subject to continuous processes of review and to changing circumstances. Accordingly the information contained within the guide is subject to change without notice.

January 2011

This handbook has been prepared by Student Academic Services in association with the University Teaching Development Centre (UTDC)

CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor**
- 3 The purpose of this guide**
- 4 Student support at victoria**
 - 4 Awareness of student diversity
 - 5 General guidelines for staff supporting students
- 6 FAQ: staff supporting students**
- 8 Common situations students may experience**
 - 8 What if a student is struggling with their studies?
 - 9 What if a student needs an extension?
 - 10 What if a student is having a stressful time?
 - 12 What if a student is experiencing difficulty around exam time?
 - 13 What if a student needs to change their course?
 - 14 What if you suspect a student is experiencing depression and/or anxiety?
 - 16 What if the student is displaying signs of suicidal behaviour?
 - 18 What if you suspect a student is misusing drugs and/or alcohol?
 - 20 What if a student is behaving in a difficult and/or demanding way?
 - 22 What if a student is having financial problems that impact their study?
- 24 Emergencies**
 - 24 All general emergencies
 - 25 Critical and distressing incidents
 - 26 Support for staff following critical or distressing incidents
 - 26 Ways for managers to help staff cope following a critical or distressing incident
- 27 Staff and student safety**
 - 27 Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee (RAAC)
- 28 Strategies to improve staff support of students in your workplace**
 - 29 Final thoughts
- 30 Contacts**

INTRODUCTION FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Victoria is committed to excellence in research and scholarship, and to providing students with opportunities to acquire, understand and apply disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to enhance their personal development.

Achieving these goals requires all staff, both academic and general, to keep our students' needs at the forefront of our minds at all times. We know that there can be non-academic aspects of students' lives that will affect their academic achievement.

I am therefore delighted to see the development of this guide which sets out straightforward solutions and suggestions for many of the issues that we, as staff, encounter in our day-to-day jobs. Most students will, at times, require that extra bit of personal or academic support to get them through a difficult moment or period, and this guide emphasises the crucial role that staff can play in responding helpfully to students at these times.

Committed and student-focussed staff supporting students to academic and personal success is a priority at Victoria, and I believe this guide will further cement Victoria's reputation in this area.

I extend my appreciation to the Student Academic Services and University Teaching Development Centre (UTDC) staff who have produced this guide, as well as to the large number of academic and general staff who have been consulted along the way.



Professor Pat Walsh
Vice-Chancellor

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide suggests ways for staff to help students who need support.

Both academic and general staff have a role in supporting Victoria University's students. Often this will be straightforward, just doing our job. Sometimes however, a staff member may be the first person students turn to for help when they are in more serious distress. Responding to students in these circumstances is important but—in the midst of a busy job—can be demanding; especially when you don't have all the answers.

This guide is designed to:

- give practical advice on supporting students
- foster the University as a community which provides a supportive environment for both students and staff
- recognise that all members of the Victoria community have a role to play in the academic and personal development of students
- acknowledge the effort and commitment that Victoria's staff make every day in helping students to achieve their full potential.

We recognise that there are a number of non-academic aspects of student life that affect students' academic achievement. These include their financial and social situation; their mental well-being; their cultural perspectives; their family relationships; their living circumstances and their work life. Such factors are influential in a student's retention and success at university.

When students experience problems some will be open, receptive to help and resourceful in seeking it. Others find seeking support challenging and some express their distress in indirect ways. Whānau, friends, workmates and University staff can provide the support that might be needed.

The earlier the support, the more likely that there will be a positive resolution.

STUDENT SUPPORT AT VICTORIA

“Inclusion is a cohesive sense of community, acceptance of differences and responsiveness to individual needs.”

(Stainback and Stainback, 1990)

AWARENESS OF STUDENT DIVERSITY

It is important to be aware that students come from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds and these may influence how they learn and how they respond to teaching strategies. Key principles to keep in mind are awareness of—and openness to—diversity, good communication and flexibility. Listed here are some key strategies that are inclusive, as well as being good teaching and learning practices.

Some teaching strategies include:

- familiarise yourself with the services available to students on campus—ensure administration and tutorial staff know as well
- be aware of your audience (are they first years? Non-native speakers? Students with disabilities?) and how they would best receive information, whether it is in a lecture, tutorial or course information outline
- use a range of communication mediums to keep in touch with students, such as email, text-messaging (where appropriate), face-to-face and phone conversations and the *myVictoria* portal
- in lectures or tutorials, discuss general support available to students and invite students to talk, either to you or a specific service
- use explicit clear instructions in guidelines for assessment and attendance at the beginning of a course
- recognise the importance of early and prompt feedback
- provide opportunities for group and peer learning with a variety of tasks; for example, problem-based and resource-based projects
- display material from the various University equity groups in offices and student areas to encourage students to broach questions
- allow for reasonable adjustments, for example, a lecturer giving a copy of their notes to a student with a hearing impairment.

For further information on teaching and learning strategies to help support students:

UTDC www.victoria.ac.nz/utdc

SLSS www.victoria.ac.nz/slss

DSS www.victoria.ac.nz/disability

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR STAFF SUPPORTING STUDENTS

- Establish clear guidelines on student behaviour and conduct and advertise these within your unit or School.
- Encourage positive relationships to help engage students with their studies and prevent them becoming isolated.
- Encourage students to be proactive in resolving their own problems. Give students information about networks for seeking support.
- Emphasise good study practice and provide information about course structure, administration and University culture (such as clubs, policy, student services, academic support).
- Students may approach you with problems or concerns. You might be busy, or unable to see the student for long. If you can, offer another specific time or see if someone else is available.
- If you are able to talk with them immediately, make sure the student is aware of how much time you have. Keep to this time, and make another appointment if necessary.
- Listen actively, focus on the student's concerns, and have an action plan. The student should be left with an idea of their next steps.
- If the issue cannot be resolved in the meeting, make another time to see them, or refer them on to a specialist service within the University.
- Recognise behaviour that is significantly unusual or out of character. This may be a sign that a student needs help.
- In a non-crisis situation the best way you can assist could be to refer the student to the University's health, counselling and disability services. You may need to escort them to the service or let them use your phone to make an appointment.
- Know your own limitations. If you are not trained and working as a counsellor then you are not expected to be one. Refer students on if you feel out of your depth, or if you don't have the time, skills or experience to handle the situation effectively.
- All students have to act in accordance with the *Statute on Student Conduct*. If in doubt, refer to this to help guide your approach.
- Be aware of potential conflict of interest situations. The University's policy on conduct requires that any personal relationships with students must be disclosed to your Head of School or manager. Students in need of personal or academic support can be emotionally vulnerable and staff are strongly encouraged to ensure that all interactions with them are professional. For more information see the *Conduct Policy*.

Remember that your role is not to be a counsellor or confidant, nor to take responsibility for a student's life or mental health; but, you can play a key role in starting a process whereby the problem can be solved. Your ability to recognise and respond to student distress will, of course, vary greatly depending on the amount and closeness of face-to-face student contact you have.

Gerard Hoffman, Manager, Student Counselling Service

FAQ: STAFF SUPPORTING STUDENTS

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

University staff are encouraged to take reasonable responsibility in attending to students' health and welfare. Defining reasonable responsibility is often difficult. It does not mean that staff can, or should be, overly intrusive in a student's personal affairs; students have a right to refuse offers of concern or help. However, showing concern for students in distress by making an effort to help is part of each staff member's role. It is always good practice to advise your manager, or a relevant University support service, of any serious concern about a student.

WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES?

The University expects students to take a reasonable level of responsibility for their own learning as well as for their behaviour and welfare. This means that we expect them to generally seek appropriate help when they need it. If students are not behaving responsibly, intervention is sometimes necessary. Students have a right to their privacy and freedom, but this does not prevent staff responding to concerning or unacceptable behaviour.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY?

Regardless of where you work in the University, when a student reveals personal information about themselves or their health you are obliged to keep it confidential and private. The only exception is if there are immediate and serious concerns about someone's safety.

However, it is often useful to a student if you can talk to colleagues, either academic or in student services, about their situation with the aim of assisting them. Our advice is to directly seek a student's consent prior to doing this. Even without their consent you can discuss a student's situation with appropriate staff provided that you do not identify the student and that your intention is to find the best outcome for the student.

HOW DO I RESPOND TO A STUDENT I AM CONCERNED ABOUT?

Your first step may be to talk directly to the student in order to clarify their situation. You may discover during this conversation that the student, although distressed, has a very good support network and needs little from you. In some circumstances a student will need more, and in this case you will need to consider how best to proceed. This will depend on a number of factors such as your relationship with the student, your experience with such situations and your available time.

If you are not confident, or if it is impossible to talk discreetly to the student, consult a colleague.

AS A STAFF MEMBER, WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Take note and, if necessary, document** a student's concerning behaviour. If it persists, some kind of action is probably required.
- **Offer to support the student yourself;** in many cases you can help students by expressing concern and providing straightforward support without putting yourself in the role of surrogate counsellor.
- **Consult with colleagues or other professionals** about the best way forward; if the student's issues seem complex or serious, never keep this to yourself. In many cases other staff across the University will have also had concerns about the same student.
- **Refer the student to an appropriate source of help,** which may include other University staff or services, or could include outside community services.

WHEN SHOULD I REFER A STUDENT?

In some cases students need professional help to overcome problems. The following signs may indicate that a student needs to be referred.

- The situation clearly needs specialist help.
- The situation seems complex, serious or risks someone's safety.
- There would be conflict with other areas of your role if you offer support yourself.
- The situation needs more time than you can offer, or you feel inexperienced or uncomfortable with the issues.
- The student asks for a referral.

WHERE DO I REFER THEM TO?

It is sometimes difficult to know which source of support might be best. But guiding students toward the most appropriate service is important. For a list of contacts, see page 30–32.

HOW DO I REFER?

It is generally best if the student approaches a service themselves. However, at times this will be too difficult and it may be appropriate for you to assist the student to make contact with a service, either by calling on their behalf or offering the student the use of your phone.

Sometimes it is useful to show the student the range of support services available on campus. Provide a *Services for Students* brochure or show them the Student Support website.

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/studentsservice

WHAT IF A STUDENT WISHES TO BE SUPPORTED BY ME?

Because your interaction with them has been supportive and helpful, the student may wish to be supported by you, rather than being referred elsewhere. It may also be because of the student's belief that they don't need the support of specialist services. Discuss with a colleague, manager or student services professional whether to continue support or refer. You can still be available for academic matters while they seek professional help for personal issues.

COMMON SITUATIONS STUDENTS MAY EXPERIENCE

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS STRUGGLING WITH THEIR STUDIES?

At times in a student's university study they may find they are struggling with a subject or course requirements. There can be a variety of reasons for this. For example, they may be ill-prepared for what is expected at this level of study; they may be facing transition issues to this course or institution; they may have different perspectives on the topic or process that require adjustment to the university style; they may face external pressures; they may not know how, or feel comfortable with, seeking help, or they may be struggling with balancing work, social and study activities.

Some students have the resources and connections to see themselves through these challenges, but others do not and may need to be guided or encouraged. In these situations a friendly word or direction from a tutor or lecturer is often the catalyst to help students take the steps they need.

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- poor assessment results
- frequent questions that demonstrate they have not grasped the content
- reluctance to hand in work or offer answers to questions
- general lack of attentiveness
- not showing up for classes
- sense of helplessness.

WHAT TO DO

- Ensure the expectations (workload and assessments) of the course are clear from the beginning.
- Give early feedback that encourages ongoing perseverance and gives clear direction as to what needs to be done. If they have skill-level problems, make these clear and direct them to where and how they can improve.
- Try not to prejudge or presume that the student lacks the ability to improve, or is lazy in their approach.
- Lecturers can use student contact hours to encourage students to drop by. Use this time to review the student's performance and be realistic but also clear about what needs to be done to improve.
- Link all students into the support services available (Student Learning Support Service [SLSS]; Āwhina mentoring; Te Pūtahi Atawhai; Disability Services) and encourage them to use them.
- Encourage students to set up or join a study group to support themselves: they can get help from SLSS to do this.
- Suggest they talk to their tutor or lecturer to clarify any queries they have.

WHAT IF A STUDENT NEEDS AN EXTENSION?

Some students may request an extension in order to complete an assignment. Most schools have policies regarding extensions. It is important that these are made clear in every course outline because procedures and policies around extensions differ across the University. For example, some schools require that requests be made within 24–48 hours of the assignment's due date, in writing, and accompanied by relevant documentation (usually a medical certificate or memo from a counsellor). Other schools require only a verbal request at any time before the assignment is due. Some schools penalise students a percentage grade for every day that an assignment is late; other schools have more flexible policies.

Students may not always be aware of the procedures around extensions in your School, so take some time at the beginning of the course, and before each assignment is due, to remind them of what you expect. Make sure that tutors also know what the procedures are for extensions.

Three of the most common reasons for extension requests are illness, injury, and bereavement. Other reasons include family commitments (family members who are ill or incapacitated), work commitments, overwhelming workload (all assignments due at the same time, for example), robbery, delayed travel/transport issues, and technology problems. The length of extension and the penalties which will apply may vary according to the reason, the student, and past experience.

MEDICAL OR COUNSELLING DOCUMENTATION

Not all circumstances require written documentation from health or counselling clinicians. Where academic staff and course coordinators have discretion they are strongly advised to use it as they see fit. Both Health and Counselling Services encourage students in the first instance to directly approach academic staff with requests for extensions. However, for more serious or prolonged illnesses, and situations where students are uncomfortable approaching academic staff, medical or counselling documentation is available. In these circumstances the student will have to make contact with the appropriate service themselves.

Note that the relevant academic staff member may approve extensions until the last day of the examination period. After this, any extension must be approved by the Associate Dean.

Sometimes a request for an extension may be an indication that a student is undergoing a stressful time. Be mindful that this may be a plea for help and further support.

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS HAVING A STRESSFUL TIME?

Students who have to deal with adjustments such as leaving home for the first time, coping with the learning pressures of university and coming to terms with independence and adult relationship issues are often under a lot of stress. Sometimes the demands of these situations can grow until they are overwhelming.

Recent government funding changes emphasising progression and completion may add more pressure.

Some students take issues in their stride while others do not have the same support networks or are yet to learn or develop skills such as time-management, self-awareness and communication to manage their stress and the pressure it creates.

For students facing stress or pressure of any kind and without the resources to know what to do, a simple direction from a staff member can be enormously helpful. Remember that how effectively you organise courses, set up assessments and give feedback can also minimise stress for students.

Frontline staff, in particular, play a pivotal role in recognising and responding to students under stress.

EXAMPLES OF STRESS-INDUCING SITUATIONS WHICH STUDENTS MAY EXPERIENCE:

- excessive workload
- uncomfortable physical environment, eg. noisy, cramped flat
- lack of sleep
- ill-health
- prolonged physical activity
- financial difficulties
- changed living patterns due to leaving home, having new flatmates or starting a new job
- moving house
- pregnancy/children
- living/working/studying in an environment that is not of their culture
- living/working/studying using a second language
- hostile or uncomfortable emotional environments
- the break-up of a relationship
- the death or loss of a friend or relation.

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- anxiety
- irritability, hostility
- feeling of helplessness
- exhaustion
- loss of concentration
- poor job/academic performance
- withdrawal from others
- sadness/depression
- repeated requests for extensions.

WHAT TO DO

- Encourage the student to establish supportive relationships.
- Suggest that the student stops, assesses their situation, works out exactly what is making them feel this way, and takes action to improve it. The action could be to access the information available about key issues such as time management, study-planning or stress management through Student Learning Support Services.
www.victoria.ac.nz/slss
- Encourage the student to ask for advice: if they feel stressed at the prospect of writing assignments, they can ask for advice from their tutor, or make an appointment at SLSS.
- Be supportive and encourage the student to keep things in perspective.
- Talk to the student about getting enough exercise, sleep and nutrition, and suggest taking time each day to engage in activities that they enjoy.
- Suggest techniques such as consciously relaxing through physical exercise, breathing exercises or enjoyable activities.

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY AROUND EXAM TIME?

The onset of tests and exams is invariably a time of anxiety for students. This is perfectly normal. Giving practical advice, well in advance, about what to expect and how best to prepare for tests or exams will help. Include information for students about the workshops and resources available to them on campus through Student Learning Support Service. Explain or discuss with students, tutors and admin staff one or more of the following:

- the criteria for examinations or other assessment
- late applications
- requesting extensions
- students who have difficulty with writing or reading
- illness or impairment on the day of an exam
- applying for a special pass
- aegrotats: when a student can apply for an aegrotat and for what reasons; the conditions a student must meet to be eligible for an aegrotat; how to apply for an aegrotat; when an aegrotat may not be approved
- that Faculty Student Administration Offices manage all exam-related issues and should be the first point of contact for students at exam time
- if they need to apply for alternative exam facilities or an aegrotat refer them to the appropriate service (Health, Counselling or Disability Services) and/or Faculty Student Administrative Office.

For more detailed information see:

www.victoria.ac.nz/timetables/aegrotat.aspx

www.victoria.ac.nz/counselling

www.victoria.ac.nz/slss

www.victoria.ac.nz/disability

www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/health

WHAT IF A STUDENT NEEDS TO CHANGE THEIR COURSE?

Students, especially in their first year, often want to change courses without considering:

- managed enrolment and limits on many courses
- the cost implications, due to non-refunded fees
- their financial status regarding scholarships or allowances/loans
- the progress of their degree
- that their reasons for wanting to change course may be unrealistic, eg. unwarranted fear of failure.

Tutors or course coordinators should give concerned students a realistic view of their ability in a subject and refer them to Student Learning Support Services if study assistance is needed. If students are unsure of what their future holds, Vic Careers is available to answer a range of queries—from the general exploration of career ideas and the career implications of subject choices, to details of specific jobs, employers, or postgraduate courses. There may be financial implications of course changes so students should check this with Financial Support & Advice.

If changing courses is suitable for the student, direct them to the Faculty Student Administration Office corresponding to their subject/degree for advice on how to withdraw.

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/dates.aspx

www.victoria.ac.nz/careers

www.victoria.ac.nz/slss

www.victoria.ac.nz/finadvice

WHAT IF YOU SUSPECT A STUDENT IS EXPERIENCING DEPRESSION AND/OR ANXIETY?

For many students, especially those who have come to university from high school, high levels of stress can be associated with the adjustments they have to make in leaving home, coping with new learning pressures and coming to terms with independence and adult relationship issues. Most students are working part time to survive financially and this can considerably complicate life. Stress and change can be overwhelming, even for normally resilient and healthy students, and at times anyone can develop unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drug overuse, social isolation and withdrawal.

Stress and emotional distress can lead to, or exacerbate, depression and anxiety. These common mental health conditions vary in nature and duration. Typically, people experiencing high levels of stress or mental distress find it difficult to seek help. University staff can often play a pivotal role in assisting students to cope with stress and to seek appropriate help. People experiencing depression and/or anxiety can have a good quality of life when they are well supported. The earlier people get the support they need, the better.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION:

- feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness
- a deep sense of sadness
- an inability to experience pleasure
- irregular eating and sleeping
- difficulties with concentration, memory, and decision-making
- fatigue and social withdrawal
- suicidal thoughts or behaviours
- reduced interest in study.

SIGNS OF ANXIETY:

- agitation and apprehension
- panic attack symptoms
- avoidance
- irrational fears
- fear of losing control
- rumination and excessive worry
- sleep or eating problems
- difficulty speaking in tutorials or in class presentations.

WHAT TO DO

- Talk to the student in private.
- Listen carefully and clarify the student's situation.
- Express your concern about the situation.
- Check if the student needs to be, or is already, receiving professional help.
- Be willing to consider or offer academic accommodations (eg. an extension on an assignment), if appropriate, as a way of alleviating stress and instilling hope.
- Refer or take students to Student Counselling or Student Health for specialist assessment, or Disability Services for support and advice.
- If they need to apply for alternative exam facilities or an aegrotat refer them to the appropriate service (Health, Counselling or Disability Services) and/or Faculty Student Administration Office.
- If necessary, be prepared to ask the student if they have had thoughts of suicide.

AVOID:

- expecting the student to stop feeling depressed without support
- assuming that family or friends know about the student's depression
- ignoring the student
- downplaying the situation
- arguing with the student or disputing that the student is feeling depressed
- providing too much information for the student to process.

WHAT IF THE STUDENT IS DISPLAYING SIGNS OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR?

Although suicide is a rare event, it is a leading cause of death among university students. Suicidal states are often associated with depression, and other serious mental health disorders. Professional follow-up with those who disclose their suicidal thoughts can significantly reduce the risk. Generally, suicidal people do disclose their thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

A suicidal student who confides in someone is often ambivalent about suicide and open to discussion.

Usually, students who are at particularly high risk are depressed, have a specific plan, may have attempted suicide in the past and tend to feel isolated. Alcohol and drug overuse add to the risk.

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- suicidal thoughts, writings and statements
- pessimistic view of the future
- intense feelings of hopelessness, especially when combined with anxiety
- feelings of alienation and isolation
- viewing death as a means of escape from distress and emotional pain
- personal or family history of depression or mental illness
- personal or family history of suicide attempts
- alcohol and drug abuse
- history of self-harm.

Note: the nature of your role with students will affect your ability to recognise these signs.

RESPONDING TO STUDENTS WITH SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY:

The University has developed a policy on Responding to Students with Suicidal Behaviour which requires any staff member aware of a student exhibiting suicidal behaviour to discuss their concerns with the Counselling Service. If necessary, a counsellor will help the staff member develop a plan to engage the student in help.

WHAT TO DO

- Talk to the student in private.
- Remain calm and stay in control. This is essential to ensure good communication, so try not to take negative comments personally. Give yourself time to calm down and think things through, eg. sit the student down, make a cup of tea and then return.
- Take the student's disclosure seriously.
- Ask the student directly about their feelings and plans.
- Express care and concern, and assure the student that you will help her/him contact a professional.
- Seek advice from the Counselling Service on **04-463 5310**. If necessary, they will help develop an immediate plan to support the student.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

Campus Care: **ext. 8888** or **04-463 9999**

Crisis Assessment Treatment and Team (hospital emergency mental health support, 24/7) **04-494 9169**

Emergency Services: **111**

AVOID:

- minimising the situation: all threats need to be taken seriously even if the student is reluctant for you to take action
- arguing with the student about the merits of living
- doing nothing—the consequences can be serious.

WHAT IF YOU SUSPECT A STUDENT IS MISUSING DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL?

Drug and alcohol use among university students is commonly used to cope with anxiety, depression and the stresses of university life. It can interfere with students' academic performance, puts them at risk of serious accidents, sexual assault and even death, and can lead to dependency problems for some vulnerable individuals.

Research shows that the most abused substance is alcohol and that a large number of New Zealand university students engage in binge drinking. Party drugs, both legal and illegal, such as ecstasy, methamphetamine and "herbal highs" are also very commonly used and can be particularly harmful when used with alcohol.

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- repeated failure to handle academic, work or personal responsibilities
- a pattern of unexplained under-achievement
- substance-related disciplinary or legal problems such as assault, driving under the influence, and date rape
- denial of the negative and harmful consequences of substance use, even in the face of serious problems
- being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, particularly during the day.

Experimentation with drugs and alcohol is a common part of University students' lives. The University's Reduce Harm Committee meets regularly to coordinate activities, policy changes and awareness programmes aimed at reducing the harm associated with drug and alcohol use at Victoria. Contact nick.merrett@vuw.ac.nz

WHAT TO DO

- If a student appears under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs in an inappropriate context, ask them directly if they are okay.
- Encourage the student to seek help.
- Recognise that denial is a powerful aspect of substance misuse and that it can involve conscious or unconscious lying and distorting of the truth.
- Refer the student to the Counselling Service who will assess, counsel and, if necessary, refer to a specialist alcohol and drug agency.
- If a student's behaviour is repeatedly disruptive or inappropriate consider using the provisions of the *Statute on Student Conduct* (see page 21).

If a student appears highly intoxicated or non responsive and you are concerned about their safety, make contact with Campus Care on **ext. 8888** or call an ambulance or police on **111**.

AVOID:

- ignoring or making light of the problem
- chastising the student or condoning the behaviour
- assuming that experimenting with drugs or alcohol is harmless.

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS BEHAVING IN A DIFFICULT AND/OR DEMANDING WAY?

Some students can be intrusive and persistent, and may require much time and attention. Demanding traits can be associated with anxiety, depression and personality difficulties.

The University takes seriously any behaviour that leaves staff or students feeling uncomfortable or threatened; staff should never tolerate unacceptable or abusive behaviour. Experience has shown that the longer staff have tolerated demanding and aggressive behaviour the more likely it is to continue or even escalate.

In a large organisation it is often hard to link seemingly unrelated situations that may involve the same students(s) in different parts of the University. The Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee (RAAC) is set up to ensure there is a coordinated response to these kinds of situations, and therefore limit escalating risk-related behaviours (see page 27 for more information).

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- a sense of entitlement
- an inability to empathise
- an excessive need for control
- difficulty in dealing with ambiguity
- perfectionism
- difficulty with structure and limits
- dependency
- fears about handling life.

WHAT TO DO

- Talk to the student in a place that is safe; if necessary leave your office door open and alert other staff to where you are.
- Remain calm and in control (see page 17).
- Set clear limits and keep to the allotted time for the discussion.
- Emphasise behaviours that are, and are not, acceptable.
- Respond quickly to behaviour that disrupts class, tutorials, administration areas or consultations.
- Be prepared for manipulative requests and behaviours.
- Talk to your manager or a colleague following any distressing interaction with a student, or if there is a pattern of demanding behaviour apparent.
- *The Statute on Student Conduct* can be invoked and this can lead to a student's behaviour being addressed and them being sanctioned in a range of ways including, in serious situations, suspension, exclusion or trespass. Talk to your manager or to the University's Facilitator and Disputes Advisor on **ext. 5023** about this.
- **The Risk Assessment Advisory Committee (RAAC)** coordinates and provides assistance and advice for staff in responding quickly to situations involving any risk or threat to a member of the University community. RAAC also links seemingly unrelated incidents/behaviours that may involve the same student(s) coming to notice in different parts of the University. Contact your manager, a member of the committee, or the University's Facilitator and Disputes Advisor on **ext. 5023**.

AVOID:

- ignoring inappropriate behaviour that has an impact on you or other students
- arguing with the student
- giving in to inappropriate requests
- adjusting your schedule or policies to accommodate the student
- feeling obligated to take care of the student or feeling guilty for not doing more
- allowing the student to intimidate you. Remember—the University has zero tolerance of abusive behaviour.

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS HAVING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS THAT IMPACT THEIR STUDY?

Financial stress is a serious problem for a lot of students. The University has a Student Assistance Scheme, known as the Hardship Fund, which helps over 1,000 students a year and distributes on average \$300,000 in grants and \$100,000 in loans a year.

The Financial Support and Advice Service, who administer the Hardship Fund, will also meet individually with any student to provide advice, guidance and assistance to help resolve stressful financial situations.

COMMON PROBLEMS:

- Unexpected medical, dental or optical costs
- Flattening problems leading to extra rent, or having to move suddenly and find bond and advance rent
- Research costs needing payment prior to receiving departmental funds
- Family emergencies
- Delays in scholarship payments
- Above-average costs for textbooks or project materials
- Loss of part-time job or reduced hours of paid work
- Poor financial literacy

WHAT TO DO

Advise the student to contact Financial Support and Advice. One of the Student Finance Advisers will be able to discuss their circumstances and help them apply to the Hardship Fund if appropriate.

For more information:

www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/finadvice/hardship

email: student-hardship@vuw.ac.nz

phone: 04-463 6644

EMERGENCIES

ALL GENERAL EMERGENCIES

For all emergencies (critical incident, fire, health, etc) on any campus at any time of the day or night, staff should call the Vic Emergency Line on **ext. 8888** or **04-463 9999**. Campus Care will respond and will call emergency services if needed. If for any reason you cannot get through to campus care then phone 111.

PHYSICAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES

With a student and staff population of nearly 25,000 it is likely that from time to time an urgent response will be needed for a physical health emergency.

The Victoria Emergency Line (ext. 8888 or 04-463 9999) is the quickest way to seek help if you suspect a person needs urgent medical attention. Once alerted, Campus Care will coordinate a response and will contact the Campus Response Medics, the Ambulance Service and/or Student Health as required. If for any reason you do not get an immediate response from phoning ext. 8888, then you should phone the emergency services (phone 111).

There are portable defibrillators on each campus, and Campus Care and Campus Response Medic staff are all trained in their use. If you suspect a heart attack, please inform Campus Care of this.

The Campus Response Medics comprise staff and some students who are highly trained in rescue techniques, first aid and basic paramedic skills. Because they are based on Campus and have access to emergency medical equipment, including a defibrillator, they are the quickest first response for most physical health emergencies. Campus Care coordinates calling them out and they will always also alert the Ambulance Service.

SIGNS THAT REQUIRE AN URGENT MEDICAL RESPONSE:

- unconsciousness
- disorientation, incoherence
- evidence of epileptic or other seizures
- indications of chest pain or other possible heart problems
- breathing difficulties that do not subside with the use of inhaler or are more severe than normal
- serious physical trauma injuries including accidents.

WHAT TO DO

- Phone ext. 8888 (or 04-463 9999) immediately and alert Campus Care of the medical situation as much as you can. If you get no response phone 111.
- Campus Care will then call out either a Campus Response Medic during working hours and/or an ambulance.
- Carry out any first aid you are able to, for example check breathing and heartbeat, and stop any apparent bleeding. If you are trained in CPR, and if appropriate, begin this.
- For situations involving a number of casualties Campus Care may also involve Student Health clinicians.

CRITICAL AND DISTRESSING INCIDENTS

Occasionally members of the University community become involved in distressing or critical incidents such as serious injury, sudden death, assault or threatening behaviour. Often it will be another staff member who becomes aware of the incident or has serious concerns about the wellbeing of a colleague.

GETTING HELP IN AN EMERGENCY

For all emergencies (critical incident, fire, health, etc) on any campus at any time of the day or night, staff should call the Vic Emergency Line on ext. 8888 or 04-463 9999. Campus Care will respond and will call emergency services if needed. If for any reason you cannot get through to campus care then phone 111.

All Campus Care will quickly coordinate a response to any incident affecting staff or students on campus. For a significant incident involving serious risk or harm to large numbers of people, Campus Care will activate Victoria's Critical Incident Management Plan. You should also advise your Head of School or manager of any incident.

Victoria Emergency Line: **ext. 8888** or **04-463 9999**

BY DEFINITION, A CRITICAL INCIDENT IS:

“ Any event which has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or group.”

(Mitchell and Everly, 1993).

SUPPORT FOR STAFF FOLLOWING CRITICAL OR DISTRESSING INCIDENTS

STAFF SUPPORT TEAM

The University has a Support Team of University staff in place to ensure that members of the University community are appropriately supported in these circumstances. Although every incident is different and requires a unique response, everyone involved may be affected in some way. Early appropriate support can minimise ongoing stress reactions. The Staff Support Team is additional to counselling support available through the Employee Assistance programme (EAP).

To contact the Staff Support Team, telephone either Campus Care or the Health and Safety Unit in the first instance and they will ensure a member of the team makes contact with you as soon as possible.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Services will respond quickly to support and debrief individual or groups of affected staff.

Staff are also available to offer advice and/or support to members of staff dealing with non-critical situations relevant to their respective areas of expertise during office hours.

SUBSEQUENT INQUIRIES/PUBLICITY ISSUES

Please remember that when an incident does occur, the University, the police or fire service may have to investigate the circumstances. Any inquiries from the media should be directed to the University Communications group.

WAYS FOR MANAGERS TO HELP STAFF COPE FOLLOWING A CRITICAL OR DISTRESSING INCIDENT

Immediately after a critical incident the primary concern is to provide safety, support and stability.

- Make sure everyone is safe and notify Campus Care/ appropriate services as necessary.
- Contact one of the Staff Support Team who will arrange for immediate onsite support for managers and staff.
- Talk directly and honestly to members of your team about the critical incident that has occurred. If necessary, gather all members of the team together. (Provide food, tea, etc.)
- Remember that traumatised staff members need structure, peer support, facts and instructions on what to expect or do next. This could include contact with friends or family, and support to go home.
- Identify staff most affected or vulnerable and ensure they are closely monitored, followed up and, if necessary, referred for counselling to EAP Services.
- Expect a variety of emotional and physical reactions from staff including shock, anxiety, fear, grief and confusion following a traumatic incident.
- Consult a member of the Staff Support Team to guide follow-up actions including formal debriefing meetings, contact with the media, etc.

Take care of yourself and, if necessary, seek support from the managers or staff members detailed here.

STAFF AND STUDENT SAFETY

The University is committed to providing a safe environment for staff, students and visitors. Campus Care responds to situations where the safety of any person (or University property) is threatened. Campus Care also plays a preventative role in identifying and resolving potential problems early; they can share with staff and students strategies that may reduce the risk of a situation escalating.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAAC)

The University Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee is chaired by the Manager of Student Counselling Service and meets fortnightly throughout the year. Its members include key Campus Care staff, Faculty Managers, Student Services staff, the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor and staff from each of Victoria's four campuses.

RAAC's role is to coordinate responses to any situation involving risk of harm to staff or students by students or others within the University. Any staff member can confidentially bring a situation or student to a member of the committee. Cases discussed include students stalking, harassing and intimidating others; or students appearing mentally unwell to the extent that their behaviour is negatively impacting on others within the University.

The committee's role is also to identify recurrent issues, such as security lighting and patrols, which affect staff or student safety, and to find solutions.

Staff should make themselves familiar with the University's *Statute on Student Conduct* which sets out student behaviour which may constitute misconduct or serious misconduct, and the processes and sanctions which may be applied to reach a resolution.

Staff with concerns about students that need to come to the RAAC committee can either talk to their manager or make contact directly with a member of the committee:

Manager of Student Counselling (RAAC chair): **ext. 5310**
Facilitator and Disputes Advisor: **ext. 5023**
Campus Care Security Supervisor: **ext. 5398**

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STAFF SUPPORT OF STUDENTS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

MAKE A TIME IN YOUR REGULAR TEAM/SCHOOL MEETING TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE MATERIAL IN THIS BOOKLET, INCLUDING:

- What is your School/team philosophy and practice on supporting students?
- How do you deal with difficult and demanding students?
- What is reasonable and fair in terms of academic accommodations for students?
- When do you involve colleagues and other support services in dealing with student issues?
- How do you support each other during stressful situations in your work?

“I have had some really positive experiences at Victoria. I found that what really helped me was the professionalism of the academics who were willing to engage with their students by being available, approachable, flexible and open-minded.”

Stella Anderson, student

INVITE EXPERTS FROM SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY TO RUN BRIEF SEMINARS FOR YOUR SCHOOL/TEAM ON TOPICS OF INTEREST, INCLUDING:

- privacy and confidentiality (Student Counselling, Human Resources, Privacy Commission)
- recognising and responding to students at risk (Student Counselling)
- encouraging responsible and autonomous students (Student Learning Support, University Teaching Development Centre)
- dealing with challenging situations or people (Facilitator and Disputes Advisor)
- supporting students with temporary or ongoing impairments (Disability Services)
- responding to distressing and critical incidents on campus (members of the Staff Support Team).

REMEMBER

- Include technical, administrative and support staff in discussions and training.
- Assign new staff a mentor who is experienced with the provision of appropriate student support in your area of work.
- Check out websites from other universities across the world for resources on student support.
- If you have a particular interest in the area of collaborative student support get involved in a project researching and improving practice at Victoria.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Up to 40% of students (and probably staff) experience a period of low mood within a given year, significant enough to impact on their work and life.
- Students are more likely to seek help in a crisis from a friend, family member, tutor, peer or Residential Assistant than a health professional.
- Feedback suggests that students highly value teachers who are friendly, approachable and display personal interest in their students' progress.
- The same things that help our staff feel valued especially in stressful times (eg. personal expressions of concern and support from colleagues and managers) also work with students. A small gesture of personal support or concern may make a great difference.
- Staff can report any concern about a student's threatening behaviour to the Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee.
- Staff can access free and confidential counselling from EAP Services for any issue affecting their work or wellbeing.

CONTACTS

CAMPUS CARE

For any emergency call **ext. 8888** or **463 9999**.

The Control Room operator will know what to do.

Depending on the nature of the emergency the Control Room operator can send one or more caretakers or contact the Fire Brigade, Police or the Victoria Fire and Emergency coordinator.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 9999
- Email** campus-care@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/fm

CHAPLAINS

Catholic Chaplaincy - Kōhanga

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5499
- Email** catholic@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/chaplains/kohanga.html

Anglican Chaplaincy – Te Puna Karaiti

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5499
- Email** anglican@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/chaplains/angchap.html

Both Kōhanga and AngChap—Te Puna Karaiti offer pastoral care, spiritual direction and other support.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability Services provides advice and services for students with temporary or ongoing impairments. These include planning, liaison with academic staff, assistive technology, note-taking assistance and alternative exam arrangements.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 6070
- Email** disability@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/disability

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

The EAP is available to permanent staff who require free, confidential and professional counselling.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-472 5886
- Website** intranet.victoria.ac.nz/health-safety/medical_facilities/eap.aspx

FACILITATOR AND DISPUTES ADVISOR (FDA)

The FDA can advise on any issues to do with student conduct.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5023
- Email** jon.everest@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/disputes-advice

FACULTY STUDENT ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

Architecture & Design

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 6200
- Email** architecture@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/architecture/staff

Commerce & Administration

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5376
- Email** fca-sao@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/staff

Education

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 9660
- Email** education@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/education/staff

Engineering

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5101
- Email** engineering@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/engineering/staff

Humanities & Social Sciences and the New Zealand School of Music

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5745
- Email** fhss-student-admin@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/staff

Law

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 6975
- Email** alison.munro@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/law/staff

Science and Engineering

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5101
- Email** science-faculty@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/science/staff

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND ADVICE

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 7474
- Email** student-hardship@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/finadvice

HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAM

Occupational Health Nurse

- ☒ **Email** marie.powell@vuw.ac.nz

Safety and Risk Manager

- ☒ **Email** jeff.munn@vuw.ac.nz

TE PUTAHI ATAWHAI

Kaiwawao

Māori Student Services Advice.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 6001
- Email** kaiwawao-maori@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/kaiwawao

The professional staff of the Kaiwawao Māori service aim to ensure all Māori students receive up-to-date information and assistance to participate and succeed at Victoria University.

Manaaki Pihipihinga

Māori and Pacific mentoring.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 6015
- Email** manaakki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/mentoring/

Manaaki Pihipihinga is a free programme focused on academic achievement within the cultural framework of cooperative learning.

STUDENT COUNSELLING

The Counselling Service provides confidential counselling for all students in order to support their personal development and academic endeavours.

Counselling staff will also talk confidentially with staff about concerns around difficult situations, students at risk and student behaviour.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5310
- Email** counselling-service@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/counselling

STUDENT HEALTH

The Student Health Service provides a high standard of quality primary health care for all students at Victoria. Their doctors are experienced General Practitioners and their practice nurses are highly trained and experienced Registered Nurses. They have a psychiatrist, skin specialist and nutritionist available for specialist consultations, on referral through their service. They also assist students in applying for special exam facilities and aegrotat consideration during examinations.

- ☒ **KELBURN** 04-463 5308
- PIPITEA** 04-463 7474
- Email** student-health@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/health

STUDENT LEARNING SUPPORT

Student Learning Support works with all students from first-year undergraduates to postgraduates. Their professional staff aim to foster successful study and develop independent, active learners. They offer a variety of programmes for students ranging from one-on-one appointments to group seminars and can offer

customised workshops for subjects or courses. Feel free to contact SLSS for advice on how learning can be supported in your course.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5999
- Email** student-learning@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/slss

VIC CAREERS

Vic Careers is available to assist with a wide range of queries—from the general exploration of career ideas and the career implications of subject choices, to details of specific jobs, employers, or postgraduate courses.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5393
- Email** careers-service@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria.ac.nz/careers

VICTORIA INTERNATIONAL

The Victoria International Services team helps international students with pastoral care issues, student visa and insurance questions.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 5350
- Email** vi-advisor@vuw.ac.nz
- Website** www.victoria-international.ac.nz

VUWSA

The Student Advocate provides students with advice and information on University processes and procedures and can help resolve difficult situations.

- ☒ **Phone** 04-463 6984

