



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



Supporting and Responding to **Students** in Distress

A guide for University staff

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Supporting and Responding To Students in Distress

Introduction

From time to time members of staff may encounter students who are very distressed. Quite often the distressed student may also be underperforming academically. Sometimes students may try to mask their distress by attributing academic underperformance to some other cause.

Sometimes the issues that are the cause of the distress in the student may be relatively minor; other cases may be more complicated. Irrespective of whether the case is minor or severe, dealing with the distressed student requires some simple skills and knowledge of where you can refer the student for specific help.

This booklet is a guide to these simple skills and the sources of help. It should not be taken as a formal procedure or policy, but as a guideline to support in these situations. The health and welfare of students is everyone's concern. This guide gives you advice on dealing with both crises and more everyday situations. It is important to be prepared for emergencies but you should be aware that they occur very rarely and that expert help is available.

These guidelines will:

- Help you to recognise when a student may be distressed
- Show you how to respond/refer appropriately and effectively
- Raise your awareness of issues relating to student mental health
- Show you what you can do and how you can do it

What you can do

- Listen
- Give the student time to talk
- Understand the situation from his or her point of view
- Be sympathetic and not dismissive
- Help the student to feel understood
- Make appropriate referrals

What you can't do

- Solve all the student's problems
- Take responsibility for his or her emotional state or actions.

Roles and Responsibilities

Identifying Sources of Support

It is not always possible to know what the best source of support might be. The student may have more than one problem, or the initial problem may not be the most central.

What is important in the first instance is to refer the student to somewhere **that is acceptable to him or her**. A further referral can be made later, if appropriate.

Offering Support Directly

If you offer support yourself, you must ensure that:

- You have sufficient time within the context of your other commitments to do this.
- It does not conflict with other aspects of your role.
- You have access to consultation.
- You seek advice from colleagues or student services if you have persistent concerns.

Support for staff

Staff are encouraged to use the Employment Assistance Programme (EAP) service to help with problems at home and at work. Information on this available from the Human Resources Department.

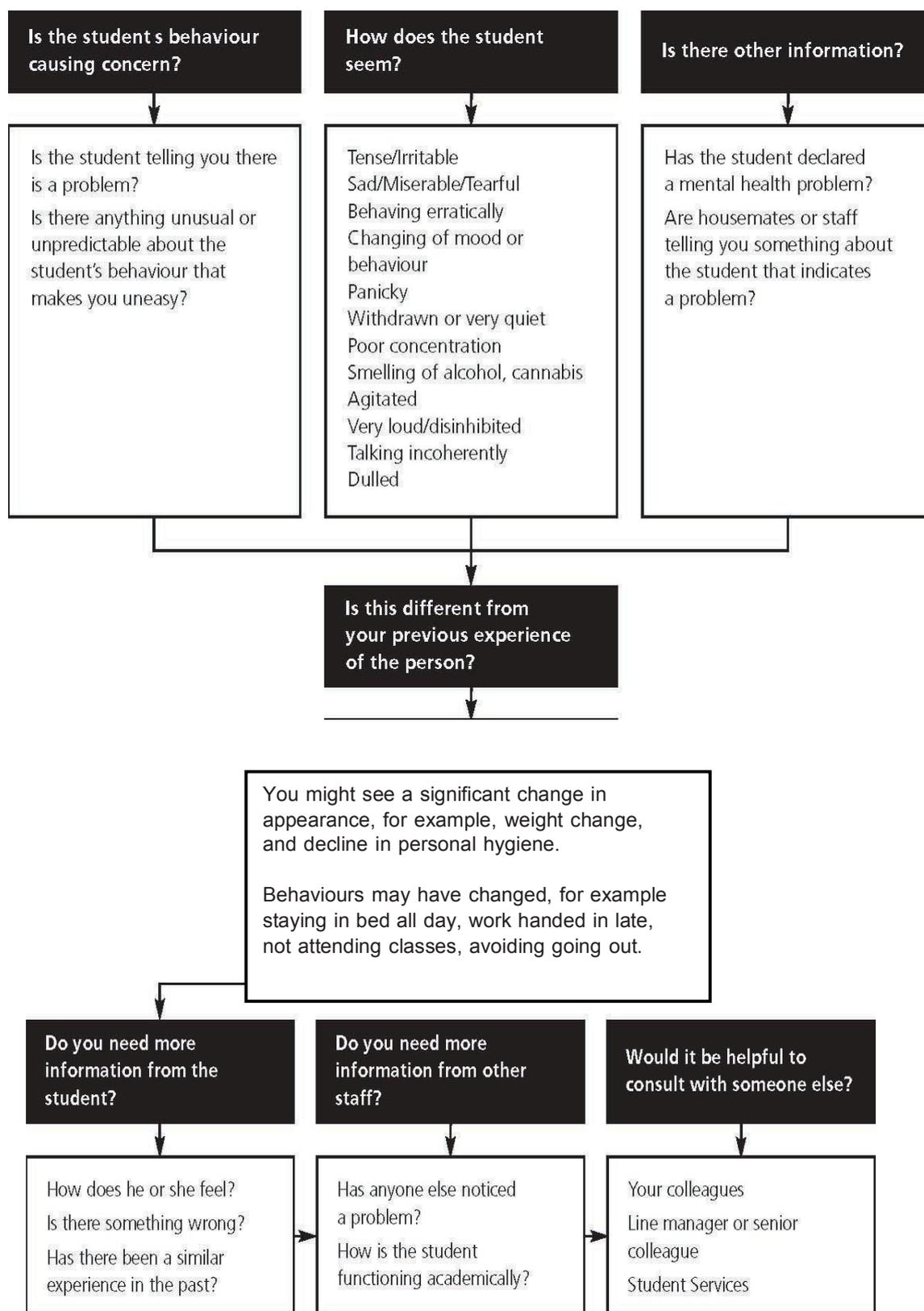
Confidentiality

- Do not disclose personal information about students to anyone outside the University, including parents, without the student's explicit consent.
- If the parents wish to contact a student, you can offer to forward a communication or tell the student they have been in touch.
- Treat personal information about students with discretion.
- If a third party contacts you about a student they are concerned about, you should encourage them to try to persuade the student to use appropriate supports e.g. counselling service.
- Do not promise confidentiality and advise the student you may have to consult a colleague.

Exceptions to keeping confidentiality must occur when there is a risk to the student by suicidal intent, threats to the life or safety of others.

The Student Counselling Service offers a confidential consultation service to all staff who may wish to discuss their concerns about students in distress.

How Do You Know There Is A Problem? Trusting Your Judgement – Check The Following



What Sort Of Support Does The Student Need?

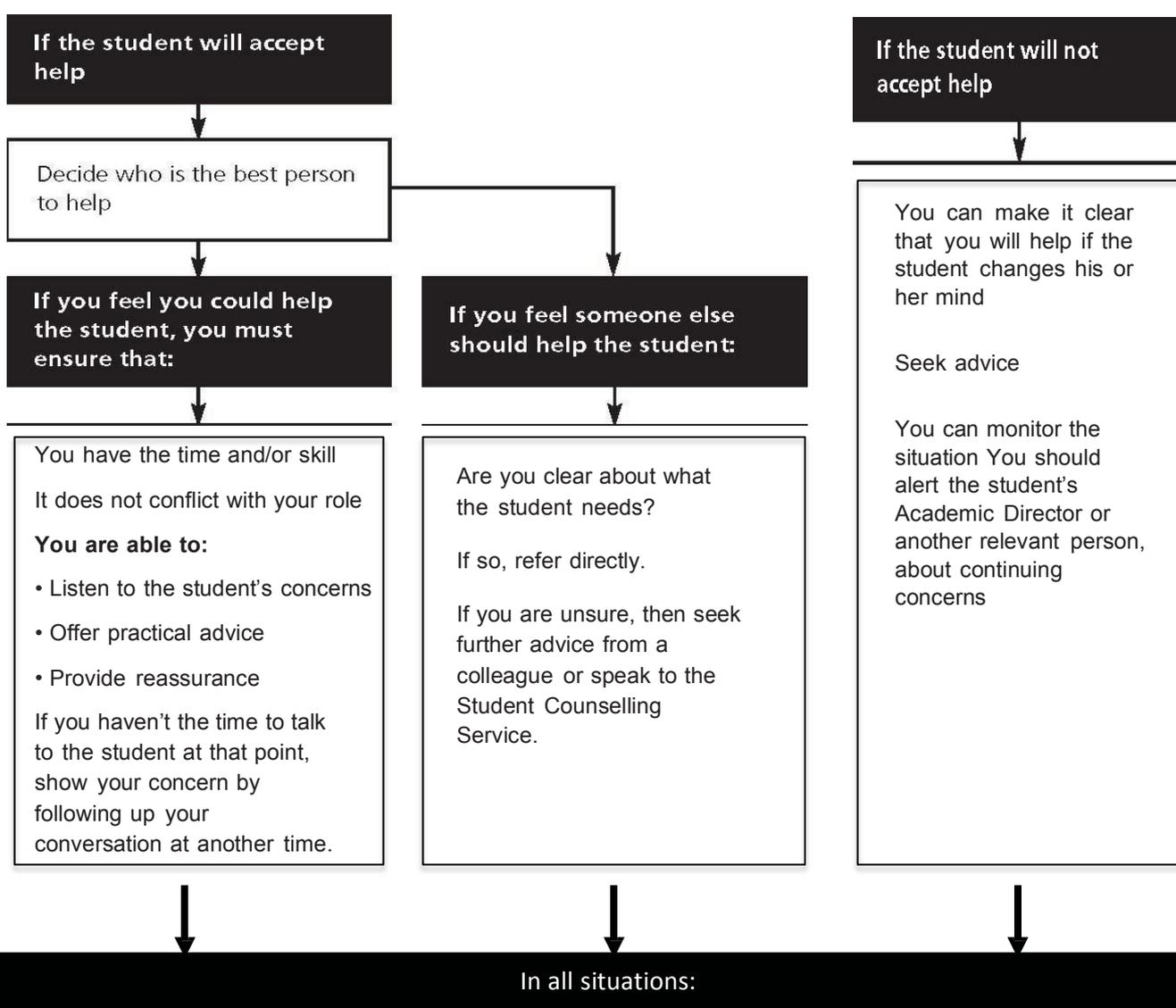
Concern:	Advice From:	Office Contact:
Is the student very worried about academic matters? Is there a persistent study problem?	A	A: Discipline or College Office (check Campus Directory for contacts)
Is there a problem of discrimination or harassment, or a complaint?	B or J	B: Student Services Office Aras Uí Chathail. welfare@nuigalway.ie  091 492364
Is the student concerned about career development? They might need support to: • Focus and set career goals • Get a job, placement , work experience • Prepare a CV or interview • Find information on study or career options?	C	C: Career Development Centre careers@nuigalway.ie  091 493589
Is the student concerned about: • Spiritual matters • Loneliness • Harassment or bullying • General advice/support on any college or personal issues	D	D: Chaplains chaplains@nuigalway.ie  091 495055
Does the student: • Experience panic attacks, extreme anxiety? • Work unrealistic hours? • Avoid starting or finishing work? • Have perfectionist tendencies?	E or G	E: Counselling Service counselling@nuigalway.ie  091 492484
Are there support issues arising from a student's disability or learning difficulty, including mental health problems?	F	F: Disability Office disability.service@nuigalway.ie  091 493541
Is the problem due to loss of motivation or difficulty concentrating? • Signs of depression • Low mood, low energy • Difficulty sleeping • General loss of interest/concentration • Loss of self confidence • Tiredness	E, G or L	G: Student Health Unit healthunit@nuigalway.ie  091 492604
Might the issue be related to the student being from overseas: • welfare • immigration • settling in, etc.?	H	H: International Affairs Office international@nuigalway.ie  +353 (0)91 49 5277
If a mature student : Are there concerns about: • application procedures • course criteria and ways to adjust to University life?	I or K	I: Mature Students Office Maturestudents@nuigalway.ie  +353 (0)91 49 3475
Is there a practical need? • Financial • Legal • Accommodation • Hardship	B, D, I or J	J: Student's Union Studentsunion@nuigalway.ie  +353 (0)91 49 3570
Has the student told you about a specific problem? Bereavement, relationship breakdown, eating disorder, alcohol/drugs?	E or G	K: Student Information Desk sid@nuigalway.ie  +353 (0) 91 49 5999
?		
Is the student concerned about his/her use of Alcohol or Drugs?	E, G or L	
Students wants information on course withdrawal, lost and found, examination transcript provision, late entry seating for exams, parking	K	

What You Should Do If the Situation Does NOT Require Immediate Action

It is NOT urgent if:

There is no immediate risk to the student, or others, although the student may be:

- Depressed, anxious, generally stressed
- Homesick, lonely, and isolated
- Having problems with relationships
- Suffering from low self-esteem
- Bereaved
- Having unexplained study or money problems



Try to debrief by talking the situation through with a colleague or the Student Counselling Service.

You are encouraged to make a note of the conversation and inform the appropriate person.

What You Should Do If the Situation IS Urgent

It is urgent if:

- You believe the student may be at risk of harm to him or herself or others.
- You are concerned for one or more of the following reasons:
 - May be at risk of serious self-harm
 - Is violent or threatening violence to people or property
 - Has completely stopped functioning
 - Seems very disorientated and out of touch with reality
 - Is behaving out of character
 - Expresses suicidal thoughts

If the student will accept help

In office hours

Refer the student directly to the Health Unit or his or her GP, or the Student Counselling Service. If possible, arrange for the student to be accompanied.

Inform the appropriate person, e.g. Dean, Faculty Office.

Out of hours

Call the student's GP on the student's behalf. If the GP is not known, call the Student Health Unit at 087-262-3997.

If all else fails, call the emergency services, or you can go to A&E (UCHG: 091-524-222)

Next day, advise the dean who will check whether further action is required.

You can also phone the Chaplaincy for advice: x5055

If the student will not accept help

In office hours

Contact the Health Unit or the Student's GP, or call the emergency services. Student Counselling Service will offer advice.

Out of hours

Call the student's GP on the student's behalf. If the GP is not known, call the Student Health Unit at 087-262-3997.

If all else fails, call the emergency services, or you can go to A&E (UCHG: 091-524-222)

In all situations:

- Try to stay calm
- Engage with the student if possible, but put safety first.
- Prioritise your own safety and that of others at the scene.
- When ever possible, make sure that you have back-up available
- You are encouraged to debrief by talking the situation by talking the situation through with a colleague or the Student Counselling Service.
- Keep a written record

What You Need To Know About Students Who May Be Talking About or Threatening Suicide

General Information A student who makes any reference to thoughts or intentions of taking their own life should **always** be taken seriously. A lot will depend on the level of 'risk' associated with their thoughts/threats. An assessment should normally be carried out by a trained professional. You should always seek professional advice. The student may not be seriously contemplating the act of suicide but may be feeling distressed and need someone to talk to, in which case counselling can be useful. If you suspect there is any immediate or serious threat (physical harm, overdose) you should treat it as a student in crisis and call emergency assistance.

Background information which you may find helpful

High risk indicators which may precede suicide

- Past attempts at suicide or self-harm
- History or presence of mental illness (depression, schizophrenia, personality disorder etc.)
- Family history of suicide
- Feelings of hopelessness, despair
- A recent death, loss or threat of loss
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Low social support
- Alcohol, drug abuse or gambling difficulties
- Unemployment, debt
- Physical illness

Assessing risk

A trained professional normally carries this out but it is a good idea for all staff to know what to look out for. If the student tells you about any of the following issues, urgent action is required.

Specificity of the plan (more details are associated with higher risk)

Lethality of anticipated method (guns, hanging, jumping are among the most lethal methods)

Availability of method (how plausible or realistic is the threat)

Proximity of social support (low social support increases risk)

Remember that involvement with a suicidal student may also have an effect on the staff member concerned. Staff can take the opportunity to debrief/seek support from the Counselling Service with this.

Suggested Course of Action

If a student comes to you and tells you they are very depressed or having suicidal thoughts and feelings the following is recommended:

1. Be kind and empathetic, prioritise them and ask who else may know about their feelings:

- Most suicidal students want to communicate their feelings safely
- Try not to minimise their feelings, e.g. “you'll feel better tomorrow”, or “you have everything to live for”
- Don't try to 'counsel'.
- Acknowledge that you may not be able to maintain confidentiality

2. If you feel the risk is immediate or they are in crisis:

- Let them know that you are bound to contact an emergency service such as Health/Counselling/Chaplaincy and share your concerns immediately.

3. If he/she tells you that are attending a G.P. or Counsellor:

- Ask is the G.P./Counsellor are aware of the extent of the students feelings?
- Can they make an earlier appointment to see them?
- Ask if they would like help to make the appointment (depressed people may find this difficult)
- If they are seeing someone outside of the college they may prefer to see college personnel? Give them the choice

4. If he/she tells you that they are not seeing a G.P or counsellor and nobody else is aware of their feelings:

- Ask if the student would like to see a member of the college health/counselling service (they may need help to do this).
- If the student **agrees** you should inform the health/counselling centre of your specific concerns regarding the student
- If the student **does not wish** to speak to a professional and you remain concerned for their safety, tell the student that you are bound to speak to someone on their behalf (Health/Counselling service or family member).

Remember: If you have any concerns about your course of action consult with the Health Unit or the Counselling Service. You should never agree to complete confidentiality with students who may be at risk of suicide.

The **ANXIOUS** Student

Facts about Anxiety

Anxiety can be generalized across a range of situations, or it may be situation-specific (e.g., test anxiety, social anxiety, public speaking anxiety).

Symptoms of Anxiety include:

- agitation
- panic
- avoidance
- irrational fears
- fear of losing control
- ruminations
- excessive worry
- sleep or eating problems

Research suggests that in cases of extreme anxiety, the most effective treatment is often a combination of psychotherapy and medication.

WHAT TO DO

- Talk to the student in private.
- Remain calm and assume control in a soothing manner.
- Focus on relevant information, speaking concretely and concisely.
- Help the student develop an action plan that addresses the main concern.
- Refer the student to the Student Counselling Office (x2484) or Student Health Centre (x2604)

AVOID

- **Overwhelming the student with information or complicated solutions.**
- **Arguing with irrational thoughts.**
- **Devaluing the information presented.**
- **Assuming the student will get over the anxiety without treatment.**

The **DEPRESSED** Student

Symptoms of Depression include:

- 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

Sometimes depression includes irritation, anxiety, and anger.

In its most serious form, depression can be accompanied by self-destructive thoughts and intentions as a way to escape from the emotional pain.

WHAT TO DO

- Talk to the student in private.
- Listen carefully and validate the student's feelings and experiences.
- Be supportive and express your concern about the situation.
- Ask the student if he/she has thoughts of suicide.
- Discuss clearly an action plan, such as having the student immediately call for a counselling appointment.
- Refer the student to the Student Counselling Office (x2484) or Student Health Centre (x2604).

AVOID

- **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.**
- **Expecting the student to stop feeling depressed without intervention.**
- **Assuming the family knows about the student's depression.**

The **DEMANDING** Student

Facts about Demanding Students

- Demanding students can be intrusive, persistent and may require much time and attention.
- Demanding traits can be associated with anxiety, depression, and/or personality problems.

Characteristics of Demanding Students include:

- a sense of entitlement
- an inability to empathize
- a 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 and comfortable.
- Remain calm and in control.
- Set clear limits and hold the student to the allotted time for the discussion.
- Emphasize behaviours that are and aren't acceptable.
- Respond quickly and with clear limits to behaviour that disrupts class, study sessions, or consultations.
- Be prepared for manipulative requests and behaviours.

AVOID

- **Arguing with the student.**
- **Ignoring inappropriate behaviour that has an impact on you or other students.**
- **Feeling obligated to take care of the student or feeling guilty for not doing more.**
- **Allowing the student to intimidate you.**

The **FAILING** Student

Facts about the Failing Student

- The student may come to class late or often may be absent.
- The student usually does not understand the course content.
- The student may be unaware of campus resources to combat the problem.
- The student might lack preparation or interest in the course.
- The student may not be able to balance work, social activities and academic study hours.

WHAT TO DO

- Encourage the student to make a private appointment.
- Review the student's performance in the course.
- Make suggestions for improvement.
- Refer the student to the Student Counselling Services (x 2484) for personal or social counselling.
- Refer the student to the Careers Office (x 3589) for educational or vocational counselling.

AVOID

- **Concluding that the student is just lazy.**
- **Presuming the student lacks the ability to be successful.**

The Student who Needs **LEARNING SKILLS**

Facts about Learning Skills

- A student may not have been taught specific learning skills prior to coming to college.
- Good time management can promote academic success.
- Paper and pencil techniques (e.g., “to do” lists, schedules, and calendars) can help students analyse and organize their time.
- Sometimes a student’s learning style does not match the teaching style of the instructor.
- Learning skills and strategies vary, according to the specific nature and content of the course.

WHAT TO DO

- Ask the student about his/her personal study time and study strategies.
- Determine if the student understands the course content.
- Provide clarification of course content, if needed.
- Build into your class a session on how to study for the course at the beginning of the semester.
- Take time to review past exams to analyse the student’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Make suggestions and encourage the student to adjust learning strategies before the next test.
- Ask if the student is utilizing any other campus resources.
- Stress the value of group study.
- Refer the student to the University’s Study Support Help Resources.
- Refer the student who speaks about a learning disability to the Disability Support Service. (x2813)
- Refer the student to the Counselling Centre (x2484)
- Refer the student to Academic Writing: (x5697)

AVOID

- **Assuming the student does not understand the course material.**
- **Believing the student should know how to learn course content.**
- **Thinking the student knows about available campus resources.**

The Student with **WRITING ANXIETY**

Facts about Writing Anxiety

- Anxiety may result in assignments being late or not turned in at all.
- A history of incompletes may be a sign of writing anxiety.
- Often the student is emotional when discussing his/her writing.

Writing Anxiety can be Related to:

- A failure to understand the assignment
- The lack of pre-writing techniques for starting the assignment
- Lack of general time management skills
- Procrastination
- Poor organization skills
- Problems with grammar
- Poor grades on writing assignments in the past
- A learning disability

WHAT TO DO

- Have a private appointment with the student.
- Listen carefully to the student's explanation of the problem.
- Refer the student who speaks about a learning disability to the Disability Support Service: [x2813](#)
- Refer the student to the Counselling Centre: [x2484](#).
- Refer the student to Academic Writing: [x5697](#)

AVOID

- **Concluding that the student is only trying to obtain extra time for the assignment.**
- **Assuming the student can simply control the behaviour by him/herself.**

The Student with **MATHS ANXIETY**

Facts about Maths Anxiety

- Students can experience maths anxiety in any class that has quantitative activities. Maths anxiety can be caused by poor maths teaching; cultural expectations (e.g., *only men excel in maths*); not being developmentally ready for certain maths concepts; having a maths learning disability; and the sequential nature of maths.
- Maths anxiety can be successfully addressed, using both psychological and learning strategies coupled with appropriate maths placement.

Symptoms of Maths Anxiety include:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Sweaty palms
- Feelings of inadequacy
- An inability to retain information in a test situation

WHAT TO DO

- Be supportive of the student and ask the student about his/her goals and what maths course is needed to fulfil those goals.
- Be sure the student has the proper background for the present math course.
- Recommend some study strategies (e.g., note cards, time management, paper-and pencil techniques) to help the student begin to take control of the learning process or some accommodations, such as extended time for an assignment.
- Refer the student to SUMS – a free drop-in support centre for all NUI Galway students who are taking any maths courses. www.maths.nuigalway.ie/cstudents/sums
- Refer the student to the Counselling Centre (x2484) for psychological or educational/vocational interventions.

AVOID

- **Minimising the situation.**
- **Expecting the anxiety to just go away.**
- **Assuming the student is just lazy and not working.**
- **Telling the student to put more time into the course without any intervention.**

If you have any queries about SUMS x4488

The Student with **EXAM ANXIETY**

Facts about Exam Anxiety

- Some anxiety often helps a student perform better under pressure. However, if students experience too much anxiety, it can affect both academic and psychological wellbeing.
- Test anxiety can be caused by many factors, such as the pressure to succeed, past experiences, and/or fear of failure.
- The student with anxiety may not perform well on tests, although grades on other course requirements are good.

Symptoms of test anxiety can include:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Sweaty palms
- Negative self-talk
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Tears
- Inability to retain test information

WHAT TO DO

- See the student privately.
- Ask about the student's exam preparation and time management skills. Suggest useful study strategies and exam preparation techniques.
- Go over the exam with the student so that the student understands his/her performance and what caused the errors.
- Encourage the student to form a study group to provide academic and psychological support.
- Refer students who speak of learning disabilities to the Disability Support Service: x2813
- Refer the student to the Counselling Service for stress management and/or psychological counselling, if needed: x2484
- Refer the student to the Academic Writing Centre if needed: x5697.

AVOID

- **Minimizing the situation**
- **Assuming the student is simply trying to ask for special attention.**
- **Thinking the student should be able to handle the problem without support.**
- **Concluding that the student must have a learning disability.**
- **Believing that if the student really understands the material, the student should be able to perform better on exams.**

Need Help? Contact the Student Counselling Office, 5 Distillery Road, Galway x2484
counselling@nuigalway.ie

The Student who **PROCRASTINATES**

Facts about Procrastination

- Procrastination is putting off something that is in the student's best interests to do, or doing less important things first.
- Avoidance of important work can lead to stress, depression, shame, and guilt which, in turn, can cause the student to avoid the same tasks in the future.
- While some students procrastinate because a given task is aversive, there is usually an emotional cause at the root of serious procrastination.

Emotional causes underlying procrastination may be classified into four categories:

- Perfectionism
- Fear of success
- Fear of failure
- rebellion

WHAT TO DO

- See the student privately.
- Be clear with deadlines, limits, and consequences.
- Identify how procrastination is not healthy for the student.
- Recognise that there are often strong emotions underlying procrastination such as guilt, fear, anger, depression, panic and shame. Chronic procrastinators may have low self-esteem or suffer extreme guilt.
- Refer the student for individual or group counselling to the Student Counselling Centre (x2484) when the student is suffering emotionally or academically from her/his procrastination.

AVOID

- **Assuming that the student is lazy or stupid.**
- **Communicating in ways that increase shame and, thereby, decrease motivation to change.**
- **Being pushy because the student could respond with resentment or rebellion.**

Need Help? Contact The Student Counselling Office, 5 Distillery Road, Galway X2484

Failure in Examinations

For any student, failing an examination is an extremely difficult experience. If you have occasion to meet a student in such circumstances (for example on Consultation Day), it is important that you remain positive and understanding during your encounter. You will be aiming to help the student improve their academic performance but also to enquire if there are underlying personal issues which could be better dealt with by referral to another service. You may find the following notes useful.

GREETING THE STUDENT / DURING THE MEETING

- Make eye contact
- Be positive in your demeanour and language
- Avoid any remarks that might be interpreted as patronising. Failing an exam is always upsetting for a student and this should be acknowledged
- Actively listen to the student, as this creates an atmosphere of empathy, understanding and trust

QUESTION, GUIDE AND REVIEW

These are suggested topics for exploration once you have established a positive contact with the student.

You haven't done all that well in subject 'X', how did you do in other subjects?

If the student has failed across the board, ask: **Why do you think you got these results?**

It may be:

1. That the student has the ability but didn't do any work at all because of lack of motivation or interest.
2. That the student does not have the ability, and found the material very difficult overall.
3. That the student had personal problems which affected performance.

Let the student know that s/he is free to discuss any issue with you (if you are willing) or with a counsellor/other (see note on referrals). If the student has failed only in your subject but is doing well elsewhere, ask: **You did well in the other subjects why not in 'X'?**

The student may admit that s/he doesn't like the subject and/or found it very difficult. In this case, grinds may be appropriate, as well as your own advice.

Did you expect the result you got? Did this expectation arise before or after sitting the exam?

If the student is surprised that s/he has failed, it may be a good idea to review the marking scheme in some detail, giving feedback on each question if necessary. This will give the student a good indication of the areas s/he needs to work on.

Think back to the day of the exam, how did you feel? Did you feel confident? Were you in good form? How did you feel when you read the paper? Were you prepared?

In some situations, the student will remember that s/he was having a bad day or that in fact, he was not prepared for the exam at all.

What plans do you have regarding study for the repeats? Do you have a study plan?

The student must be made aware that some work is necessary between now and the repeats. It may be sufficient to briefly explain what a study plan is.

Appeals and Rechecks

Re-Checks

- A re-check ensures that all parts of the script have been marked and that no errors have occurred in the recording, collating or combining of marks.
- Students may request a re-check of their examination within three weeks from the time the results are issued.
- There is a fee of €25 per subject, which will be refunded if the grade is changed.

Appeals

- An appeal can be requested if:
 - There is evidence of irregularity in the conduct of the examination.
 - If the student has good reason to believe that the mark awarded is inappropriate.
 - If there are circumstances which the examination board were not aware of at the time of their decision, for example illness or bereavement.
- Before appealing a result, the student should consult his/her script -this may be done at the consultation day. The student must set out the reasons for the appeal in a statement to the Supervisor of Examinations, and this must be done within four weeks of the date of issue of semester II exam results.
- Appeals are charged at 50 Euro per subject. This fee is refunded if the appeal is upheld.

If a student decides to request an appeal, s/he should continue to study for repeat examinations.

For re-check/appeal application forms and more information, see

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/exams/appeals/>

LEGAL ISSUES: Freedom of Information/Data Protection Acts

For further information please view: www.nuigalway.ie/data_protection/ or www.nuigalway.ie/foi/

Under the Freedom of Information Act, a student has the right to view his/her original script in your presence on the consultation day. In rare circumstances, a student may ask to receive a copy of the script. Please contact your Head of Department who will inform you of Departmental regulations on this matter.

Below is a summary of the FOI Act as it may apply to you:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 1997, individuals have a right:

- To access personal information held in the University's records
- To have official information relating to them amended where it is incomplete, incorrect, or misleading
- To have made known to them the reasons for decisions that have materially affected them.

Individuals may apply for access to records that contain personal information about them, irrespective of when it was created. The Act applies to all record types stored in any format, such as: files, letters, e-mails, loose papers, diaries, post-it notes and computer print-outs.

In addition, under the **Data Protection Act 1988 and 2003**, you are obliged to ensure that student data is kept secure: *“Appropriate security measures shall be taken against unauthorised access to, or unauthorised alteration, disclosure or destruction of, the data” – section 2(1)(d).*

Failure in Exams: Guideline from Commerce Faculty NUIG (unpublished) 2006 (www.nuigalway.ie/exams/)

Some Sources of Study Support

James Hardiman Library www.library.nuigalway.ie

- **Online Training** and Useful Guides to make essay writing and study less daunting.
- **Library Subject Support Team:** The Library's subject support staff have expertise in the literature and information resources of their subject areas. They will be delighted to help you with any enquiries and to guide you through the resources the Library has available in any given subject area

Academic Writing Centre (AWC), at the James Hardiman Library, during term time, offers free one-to-one teaching sessions tailored to the needs of individual students, providing help with essays, grammar and the overall writing process, AWC tutors give occasional workshops on essay writing and discipline-specific workshops by agreement with individual departments. writingcentre@nuigalway.ie

The Grinds Register at the Students Union: provides free ONE-TO-ONE tuition support in different subject areas. Further information available at:
www.nuigalway.ie/studentsservices/documents/studyskills

Skills4Study - A set of online study skills modules are available on Blackboard. This resource covers modules such as:

- Getting ready for academic study
- Reading and note-taking
- Writing skills
- Referencing and Plagiarism

To access this service, log on to Blackboard and self-enrol in the **Learning Centre**. Full details are available in the **Study4Study Student Guide**.

The SUMS Centre: Support for Maths Students

A free drop-in support centre for NUI Galway students who are taking maths courses.
www.maths.nuigalway.ie/cstudents/sums

If you have any queries about SUMS x4488

The Student Who Is Causing Significant Disruption on Campus and Who May Have a Mental Health Difficulty

General Advice

Sometimes you may experience a student who while not in imminent crisis can be disruptive, challenging, intimidating, acting in inappropriate ways, displaying bizarre behaviour or loss of contact from reality. Such students show little regard for personal or professional rules, regulations or boundaries.

They may have an ongoing mental health difficulty, or personality disorder, which may or may not have been present prior to college. Typically they may have difficulty with their interpretation of everyday events and consequently may behave in inappropriate ways.

Often students like this can be intimidating in a non-overt or more subtle way, yet can cause significant disruption within a department, faculty or campus.

Some indicators might be:

- Elevated need for attention from staff & colleagues
- Persistent e-mails, telephone calls, messages
- Unrealistic demands/commands on staff
- Threatening behaviour towards staff and fellow students (verbal/physical)
- Inability to accept feedback
- Low understanding of personal/professional boundaries
- Inability to form healthy interpersonal relationships
- Heightened view of their own importance/delusions of grandeur

If required, disciplinary action must only be instigated on the basis of inappropriate behaviour and not on the basis of a mental illness. It is advisable in these cases, where a mental health difficulty is suspected, to consult with the Student Health Unit: x2604 (www.nuigalway.ie/health_unit/). An Emergency, on-call telephone number, 087-2623997, is available out of hours.

Common Psychiatric Diagnostic Categories

Anxiety	Agitation, disturbed sleep pattern, significant changes in appetite, headaches, digestive difficulties, panic attacks.
Depression	Low mood, lack of motivation, sense of emptiness, withdrawal, change of appetite, self neglect, self loathing, thoughts of hurting or killing oneself.
Mania	Elated mood, rapid speech, little sleep, relentless high energy, reckless behaviour, delusions or hallucinations. (Mania with depression forms one of the 'bi-polar' disorders' such as manic depression).
Psychosis	Schizophrenia is the most common 'psychotic condition', which is a broader term used when the person loses contact with reality, which may result in some of the other symptoms listed for schizophrenia. Other diagnostic conditions, such as anxiety, depression and mania can manifest some psychotic symptoms if sufficiently intense.
Eating Disorders	Eating disorders include a range of conditions that can affect someone physically, psychologically (mentally) and socially (their ability to interact with others). The most common eating disorders are: Anorexia nervosa, when someone tries to keep their weight as low as possible, for example by starving themselves or exercising excessively Bulimia, when someone tries to control their weight by binge eating and then deliberately being sick or using laxatives (medication to help empty their bowels) Binge eating, when someone feels compelled to overeat
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders	Repetition of behaviours, rituals, checking, ruminating, repetitive thoughts.
Phobias	Intense fear, usually with one focus (such as heights, rats, social situations, etc.)

**Summary of psychiatric conditions is based upon an information sheet entitled 'Common Mental Health Terms', produced by the University of Leicester Student Psychological Health Project

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/flu/A-Z/E/Eating-disorders/>

The **AGGRESSIVE** or **POTENTIALLY VIOLENT** Student

Facts about Aggression

- Aggression varies from threats to verbal abuse to physical abuse and violence.
- It is very difficult to predict aggression and violence.

Some indicators of potential violence include:

- Paranoia/mistrust
- An unstable school or vocational history
- A history of juvenile violence or substance abuse
- Prior history of violence or abuse
- Fascination with weapons
- History of cruelty to animals as a child or adolescent
- Impulse control problems

WHAT TO DO

- Assess your level of safety. Call **112** or **999** if you feel in danger.
- Remain in an open area with a visible means of escape.
- Explain to the student the behaviors that are unacceptable.
- Stay calm and gain control of the situation by setting limits.
- Use a time -out strategy (that is, ask the student to reschedule a meeting with you once she/he has calmed down) if the student refuses to cooperate and remains aggressive and/or agitated.
- Consult with professionals at the Counseling Center (x 2484).
- Contact the Security office (x 2198) to see if they have a record of previous abuse by this student.
- Contact the Security Office (x 2198) to have them come to monitor the situation.

AVOID

- **Staying in a situation in which you feel unsafe.**
- **Meeting alone with the student.**
- **Engaging in a screaming match or behaving in other ways that escalate anxiety and aggression.**
- **Ignoring signs that the student's anger is escalating.**
- **Touching the student or crowding his/her sense of personal space.**
- **Ignoring a gut reaction that you are in danger.**

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders, including Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia, and Binge-Eating, are characterised by an abnormal attitude towards food that causes someone to change their eating habits and behaviour.

Symptoms associated with eating disorders include:

- Preoccupation with weight and body shape
- Moodiness or irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Food restriction or purging behaviours
- Fatigue and increased susceptibility to illness
- Perfectionism

WHAT TO DO

- Speak to the Student in private.
- Be supportive.
- Refer the student to the Student Health Unit; (www.nuigalway.ie/health_unit/) x2604 or the Student Counselling Service, (www.nuigalway.ie/counsellors/), Tel. (x2484) for guidance.

USEFUL LINKS:

Body Whys: www.bodywhys.ie Helpline: Lo-call ☎ 1 890 200 444

Providing help, support and understanding for people affected by eating disorders including specific services for families and friends.

Email: info@bodywhys.ie

☎ Helpline 353 (01) 2835126

Overeaters Anonymous (www.oahope.com)

☎ (01) 278 8106 **Email:** oahope@gmail.com

The Victim of Sexual

Consent can't be inferred from passivity or silence; nor can a current or previous relationship constitute consent.

Examples of sexual assault include:

- Completed or attempted rape
- Threats of rape
- Sexual coercion
- Unwanted sexual contact with force or threat of force
- Stalking

Listen without conveying judgment and be aware that victims can feel shame and anger.

- Go to, or contact, the A & E Department of your nearest general hospital
- Contact the emergency services by calling 999 or 112.

AVOID

- **Expressing judgment even when high-risk behaviours on the part of the victim (e.g., intoxication) were involved.**
- **Pressuring the student to file a police report.**

Support Services:

Galway Rape Crisis Centre: Support service for women and men who have experienced rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse.

www.galwayrcc.org

Crime Victims Helpline: Resource and advocacy service for victims of crime.

www.crimevictimshelpline.ie

Free Phone 116 006

Text on 085 1 33 77 11

Email: info@crimevictimshelpline.ie

Responding to Substance Abuse

Facts about Substance Abuse

- Alcohol and drug abuse among university students interferes with academic performance, puts them at risk for serious accidents and even death, and can lead to addiction problems for a subset of individuals.
- Substance use and abuse among university students is often a misguided way to cope with anxiety, depression, and the stressors of college life.

Signs that a student may have a substance problem include:

- Repeated failure to handle academic work or personal responsibilities
- A pattern of unexplained underachievement
- Denial of the negative and harmful consequences of substance use, even in the face of serious problems.

WHAT TO DO

- Treat the situation as serious.
- Encourage the student to seek help.
- Refer the student to the Health Centre (x2604), or the Student Counselling Centre (x2484) for assessment and counselling.

AVOID

- **Ignoring or making light of the problem.**
- **Assuming that experimenting with drugs or alcohol is harmless.**

Helpful Resources:

Western Region Drugs Task Force (WRDTF) <http://www.wrddf.ie>

Aims: To develop an integrated and well managed response to drug and alcohol problems across the region. **Telephone:** 091 480044 **Email:** info@wrddf.ie **Website:** www.wrddf.ie

HSE DRUGS HELPLINE – 1800-459-459

www.drugs.ie – drug and alcohol information and support in Ireland.

Further information available at http://www.nuigalway.ie/student_services/counsellors/Alcohol.html

The Student with **Career Concerns**

The **UNDECIDED** Student

Facts about Being Undecided

- Being undecided about a subject choice or career is a normal developmental process.
- Many students change their subject choice once or twice before settling on a career path.
- Self-exploration and gathering information about subjects and careers are important steps in making a career decision.
- Difficulties and delays in making a career decision can lead to stress and poor academic performance.

The **INDECISIVE** Student

Facts about Career Indecision

- Indecisiveness can refer to chronic difficulties in making decisions about a course of study or career, and often in other areas of life.
- Chronic indecisiveness is a significant impairment in decision-making and is not a normal developmental stage.
- Indecisiveness can be related to any number of internal and external barriers or conflicts.

WHAT TO DO

- Be supportive and understanding.
- Encourage exploration through discussion, course selection, work, volunteering, extracurricular activities, and counselling if the issues are persistent
- Gently point out the self-defeating patterns or symptoms.
- Refer the student to the Career Development Centre (x3589) for career support, occupational and course information, internships and information about the world of work.

For more information on Career Development Centre, email careers@nuigalway.ie or visit www.nuigalway.ie/careers or see NUIG Careers on YouTube or Twitter or Careers.NUIGalway on Facebook.

Information About 24 Hour Help Services

Medical Support

Emergency out-of-hours number for NUIG Health Unit Mobile: 087-2623997

This number is automatically diverted to the doctor on call. The service is available to all registered students of NUIG. Call-outs are liable to a fee.

Westdoc- GP Out of Hours Service

Westdoc, an out-of-hours GP service, is available between 6.00pm and 8.00am, Monday to Friday and 24 hours on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The service is by appointment and patients access the service via a lo-call number, 1850-365-000.

Appointments with the GP are given at a particular centre or, where necessary, at the patient's place of residence. There are currently 104 GP's participating in Westdoc.

University College Hospital Galway, Newcastle Road, Galway Telephone: 091 524 222

(<http://www.guh.hse.ie>). Students can be seen in the accident and emergency departments of local hospitals. There is a €100 fee to be seen in casualty, but G.P. referrals and medical card holders are exempt. There are no allowances for students.

Emotional Support

The Samaritans: 14 Nun's Island, Galway.

☎ 091-561-222; Samaritans

Aims to be available to befriend, support and listen to the suicidal and despairing. The service is available 24 hours a day, every day. Contact is usually by phone, but visitors are also welcome.

Email: jo@samaritans.org _ **Web:** <http://www.samaritans.org/> **Mobile/Text:** 087 260 9090

Support Groups and Services

Local and National services arranged by:

- Alcohol and Addictions
- Bereavement and Suicide
- Counselling – General
- Crisis Pregnancy
- Domestic Violence
- Eating Disorders
- Mental Health Support
- Money Matters
- One-Parent Families
- Relationships
- Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Health
- Sexuality
- General Advice and Resources
- Web-Based Resources

Alcohol and Addictions

Alcoholics Anonymous

General Service Office: 109 South Circular Road, Leonard's Corner, Dublin 8

☎ + 353 (0) 1 4538998

Web: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Email: ala@indigo.ie

☎ 091 567907 for details of meeting times in NUI, Galway.

Al Anon

Al Anon meets in NUI, Galway Chapel Common Room every Fri from 7.00pm to 9.15pm.

Web: www.al-anon.alateen.org

Alcoholism Counselling and Advisory Service Address:

Merlin Park, Galway

☎ 091 845634

Gamblers Anonymous

For details of Gamblers Anonymous meetings in your area, visit the website at www.gamblersanonymous.ie

Narcotics Anonymous

4-5 Eustace Street, Dublin 2

☎ 01-830-0944 Western Area Helpline: 086-814-9004

A group of recovering addicts who have found a way to live without the use of drugs. It costs nothing to be a member, the only requirement is a desire to stop using.

Western Region Drugs Taskforce (WRDTF)

Unit 6, Galway Technology Park, Parkmore, Galway

www.wrddf.ie

E-Mail: info@wrddf.ie

☎ 091 480-044

Bereavement and Suicide

Living Links

www.livinglinks.ie

☎ 087 412 2052

National Suicide Bereavement Support

www.nsbsn.org

A directory of bereavement and support groups in Ireland

Pieta House: Preventing Self-Harm & Suicide

☎ 353 (01) 601 0000

www.pieta.ie

Pieta House, Preventing Suicide and Self Harm, is on Facebook.

The Samaritans

14 Nun's Island, Galway.

☎ 091-561-222; Samaritans Nationwide: ☎ 1850-609-090.

Aims to be available to befriend, support and listen to the suicidal and despairing. The service is available 24 hours a day, every day. Contact is usually by phone, but visitors are also welcome.

Email: jo@samaritans.org **Web:** <http://www.samaritans.org/> **Mobile/Text:** 087 260 9090

Counselling – General

Jigsaw

Fairgreen Road, Galway

<http://www.jigsaw.ie>

Jigsaw is Headstrong's innovative service development programme, youth-friendly projects that bring community services and supports together to better meet young people's mental health needs.

Jigsaw Galway provides a free and confidential (private) support service for young people aged 15 - 25, with a drop-in centre on Fairgreen Road (across from the new Coach Station) in Galway city.

As part of the national Jigsaw network, Jigsaw Galway aims to make sure that young people's voices are heard, and that they get the right support, where and when they need it.

Pro-Consult

1 St. Helen's Street, Galway

☎ 091-589-581

Email: office@proconsult.iol.ie

Low-cost counselling available.

A list of private counsellors is available from the Student Counselling Service.

Crisis Pregnancy

The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme

www.crisispregnancy.ie

The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme is a national programme tasked with developing and implementing a national strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland.

CURA

Aras de Brun, Newtownsmith, Galway

☎ 1850-622-626 / 091-562-558

www.cura.ie

CURA is a voluntary organisation which offers support and help to those who are faced with a crisis pregnancy. There are 16 CURA centres around the country. Centres can be contacted by telephone, on the local number, or on the National Locall number. Most centres operate a drop-in service. You do not need an appointment to see a counsellor or have a pregnancy test.

+Options

☎ 0850-2006-00

www.positiveoptions.ie

Crisis Pregnancy Services

Domestic Violence**Domestic Violence Services Galway**

Waterside House Email waterside@copegalway.ie

☎ 091 565985

COPE**Waterside House Refuge**

☎ 091-565-985

www.cope.ie

Provides support for women experiencing domestic violence. Outreach service available in the county.

Eating Disorders**Bodywhys**

18 Upper Mount St., Dublin 2 / Central Office, P.O. Box 105, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

☎ **Helpline:** 1890-200-444 **Office:** 01-283-4963

www.bodywhys.ie

Email: alex@bodywhys.ie

Follow Bodywhys at twitter.com/bodywhys or facebook.com/bodywhys

Overeaters Anonymous

Waterside House, Galway

☎ 091-562-535

www.overeatersanonymous.ie

Mental Health Support**Aware**

www.aware.ie

Email: info@aware.ie or wecanhelp@aware.ie

☎ 01-661-7211

Aware lo-Call **helpline:** 1890 303 302

Providing support and assistance to those whose lives are affected by depression

Open Mon-Fri 10am-7pm. Available support: Depression Support Groups, online support group service confidential email

Grow

www.grow.ie

☎ GROW Info-line: **1890 474- 474** **Email:** info@grow.ie

GROW is a Mental Health Organisation which helps people who have suffered, or are suffering, from mental health problems.

Young Adult (18-30) section of Grow has resources for Young Adults with easily accessible Grow Young Adult Support Groups in your area. Further details www.grow.ie/youngadult

Mental Health Ireland

Helen Dempsey, Danesfield House, Sea Road, Galway

www.mentalhealthireland.ie

information@mentalhealthireland.ie

Providing help to those who are mentally ill and promoting positive mental health.

Money Matters**MABS**

☎ 0761 07 2000

Email: helpline@mabs.ie

www.mabs.ie

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is the free, confidential, independent and non-judgmental service for people in debt, or in danger of getting into debt, in Ireland.

☎ Helpline: 0761 07 2000; operates Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm.

Galway MABS

3rd Floor, The Halls, Quay Street, Galway

☎ 0761 07 2570 **Email:** galway@mabs.ie

www.mabs.ie

One-Parent Families**Families, Fathers and Friends**

Block 1, suite B, Terryland Retail Park, Headford Road, Galway

☎ 091 530048

Email: info@fathers.ie

www.fathers.ie

A charity that provides specialized counselling, mediation, and educational workshops for men, women and adolescents; provides support for unmarried, separated or divorced fathers.

Office hours: 10 am– 6 pm Monday to Friday (available on mobile outside office hours)

Gingerbread Ireland

29/30 Dame St., Dublin 2

☎ 01-671-0291

Fax: 01-671-0352

Open Monday – Friday, 10 AM – 5PM. Encouraging and supporting single, separated and sharing parents.

One Family

☎ One Family Helpline Lo-Call: 1890 662212

Email: support@onefamily.ie

www.onefamily.ie

One Family is a national organisation offering support and information to all members of one-parent families.

Rainbows

☎ 090-964-2661 / 091-565-066 / 01-473-4175

Support programme for children and teenagers in single parent families

Relationships

Accord

Address: Pastoral Centre, Arus de Brun, Newtownsmith, Galway

www.accord.ie

☎ 091-562331

Accord offers a safe, professional and confidential process facilitating couples and individuals to explore, reflect and resolve difficulties in their marriage and relationships. Means tested.

Sexual Abuse & Violence

Adult Counselling Service (WHB)

☎ 1800234 114

For adults who experienced childhood sexual abuse. Free.

CARI

www.cari.ie

☎ 1890 924 567 Email: helpline@cari.ie

An organization providing therapy to children who have experienced sexual abuse, and support services including counselling to families and groups.

Galway Rape Crisis Centre

7 Claddagh Quay, Galway.

www.galwayrcc.org

☎ Helpline: 1800-355-355 or 091-583-149

Sexual Health

AidsWest

☎ (091) 566266

E-mail info@aidswest.ie

www.aidswest.ie

AidsWest is a voluntary organisation funded by HSE West. Here you will find useful information and support in relation to all aspects of HIV/AIDS as well as STI's and sexual health.

Sexuality

Galway Gay Helpline

☎ 091-556-134 (8PM – 10PM, Tuesday & Thursday)

Galway Lesbian Hotline

☎ 091-546-611 (8PM – 10PM, Wednesday)

Lesbian and Gay Resource Group

The Other Place, 8 South Main Street, Cork

☎ 021-427-8470

Lesbian Helpline

☎ 021-427-8745 (Thursday, 8 – 10 PM)

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Helpline

☎ 1890 929 539

www.lgbt.ie

The website provides a gateway to information and support options for LGBT people in Ireland. We also have information that will be useful for people questioning if they might be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

The LGBT Helpline provides access to a network of trained volunteers who provide a non-judgemental, confidential, listening support and information service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and their family and friends.

National Lesbian and Gay Federation

6 South William Street, Dublin 2

☎ 01-671-0939

Email: gcn@tinet.ie**General Advice and Resources****Citizens Information**

☎ 0761 07 4000

www.citizensinformation.ie

Free and confidential information on all your rights and entitlements.

For details of the Citizens Information Centre in your area, visit the website.

Galway Youth Information Centre

Ozanam House, Augustine St., Galway

☎ 091-562-434

Email: yicgalway@esatclear.iewww.youthinformation.ie**Society of St. Vincent De Paul**

Oznam House, Augustine Street, Galway

☎ 091-563-233

SPARK

7 Francis St., Galway

☎ 091-561-737 / 087-650-2349

Email: spark@gyf.ie

Support Project for Adolescent Refugee Kids: Project for 12-18 year-old refugee and asylum seekers, providing information, counselling, social activities, individual, group and family support work.

Tagaste House

☎ 091-568-483

Support for young people

Web-based Resources

FOR STUDENTS OF NUIG

Participate, a free online programme for shyness and social anxiety, now available to NUI Galway students.

To explore an introductory module, please go to <https://participate.nuigalway.ie/>, and follow the 'Register' instructions - this will bring you to an introduction which will explain how it works, lets you measure your own social anxiety, and allows you to apply for the full programme.

SilverCloud, a secure, immediate access to online supported CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) programmes, tailored to your specific needs. Our programmes have demonstrated high improvement rates for depression, anxiety and stress.

It's flexible – access it anywhere, on your computer, tablet or mobile phone.

Just click on <https://nuigstudentcounselling.silvercloudhealth.com/signup> to begin.

References

Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress, Myra Woolfson, University of Nottingham Counselling Service. (This is the original source for many of the guidelines used)

University of Maryland Counselling Centre. (2006). Helping Students in Distress – A Faculty and Staff Guide for Assisting Students in Need.

Supporting Students in Difficulty (2006) A guide for staff at the University of Leicester Student Support and Development Centre.

A Resource Manual for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention in Third Level Institutions 2003. (Partnership initiative TCD, Dublin and Northern Area Health Board)

Failure in Exams – Guideline from Commerce Faculty, NUIG (unpublished) 2006

Recognising and Assisting Disturbed and Disturbing Students: Guidelines for Faculty and Staff Student Counselling Service, University of Limerick, 2005

Helping Distressed Students: A Guide for University Staff Edinburgh University 2005

Crisis?

If you, or someone you know, is in crisis and need someone to talk to

Contact **Samaritans** on 1850 60 90 90 (Republic of Ireland)

Go to, or contact, the A & E Department of your nearest general hospital
Contact the emergency services by calling 999 or 112

Contact your local doctor, listed under 'General Practitioners' in the Golden Pages or visit www.icgp.ie

