

Pastoral Support for Supervisees

During their degrees, some students experience serious problems, and as a supervisor, you will often be their first port of call. It is important to remember that you do not have any kind of 'parental' responsibility for your supervisees, and it is not expected that you will be able to solve their problems or act as a counsellor. However, you will want to give your students the best support possible, and there are a number of mechanisms by which you can do this.

The University has a very useful **online guide for staff** to help you provide student support:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/>

The University also provides a great **online guide for students** on how to access support at York:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/>

This document aims to summarise a few of the key points relevant to chemistry:

Your Role as Supervisor

Ultimately, it is the supervisor's role to signpost not to solve all the problems.

For the university guidelines on this aspect of your job see:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/>

Useful questions to ask when you meet with a student in distress are:

- i) What is the problem?
- ii) How is the problem impacting on your work?
- iii) What can the department do to help you with your problems?
- iv) Are you/have you thought about seeking help from outside the department?
- v) Is it OK if I talk to XXXX about these problems?
- vi) Have you discussed this with your friends/family - would that help?
- vii) Is there anything more that I can do?

It is good practice to briefly write up meetings where students bring **serious** problems to your attention, and to put a note onto their confidential file, with the student's permission.

You should not contact family/friends without student permission. If you are contacted by family, you should not release information without the consent of the student. However, if friends/family contact you with concerns, you can investigate on their behalf and ask the student to get in touch with them. With student (written) permission it would also be permissible for you to get in touch with family on the student's behalf.

Within the Department

In many cases you will need to inform relevant members of staff involved with teaching the student that there is a problem which may have affected their performance (although you will not need to disclose its nature). You should inform the student that you will be doing this. In serious cases, you may wish to get assistance from other members of staff – in this case, you should have permission from the student involved. There are a number of people who can help:

- i) **College Director of Studies** (AKDK, AR, JMS, PBK, TJD [on research leave in Autumn 2021], NJW, SS [for Biochemistry students])
- ii) Director of Teaching & Learning (NDL)
- iii) **Chair of Board** (DAW)
- iii) **University Welfare officers** (swo-opendoor@york.ac.uk)
- iii) **Head of Department** (in serious cases) (CED)
- iv) **Disabilities officer** (if relevant) (JPSM)
- v) **Study skills officer** (if relevant) (ABH)
- vi) **Women's advisor** (if appropriate) (AR)
- vii) **Harrasment Officer** (if appropriate) (PHW)
- viii) **LGBTQ+ Contacts** (if appropriate) (DAW, DKS, CED, KDC, LJ, PAOB, PHW)

Outside the Department

There is a wide range of university support to which you should signpost students:

i) **Student support services**

Student support services are formally responsible for student support across the university. They can be contacted by email: student-support@york.ac.uk. This team tends to organise the administrative side of student support and can help in serious cases. Ultimately, this unit is responsible for student welfare in York.

ii) **College welfare team and the college provost**

This is very useful for students living in college. You should check the *accommodation college* of the student. The provost can check on the student in college and has a formal pastoral role. In some cases the college provost will become the primary contact for the student – but they will involve you in discussions about the student's academic work.

For details of the college welfare teams, go to:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/help/college-support/>

iii) **Open door team**

This is without doubt the best place for students to go for initial emotional/psychological support of any type. They run a triage system so all students who turn up can be rapidly assessed, and

directed to the best place for further help. You should advise students to attend if relevant. The Open Door Team can provide 'authorised absence' notes.

For information about the work of the open door team:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/open-door/>

iv) **Nightline**

Nightline is a confidential student listening service run by students for students of The University of York and York St. John. They also offer free sexual health supplies, and have information on a number of topics. <http://www.yorknightline.org.uk/>

They are open from 8pm until 8am every night during the University of York's term time. Students can either drop in to the flat in Heslington (between the alumni building and The Charles pub), instant message or call on 01904 323735 or e-mail nightmail@yusu.org

v) **GP**

Students should always be advised to see their GP for medical matters. The GP can provide 'authorised absence' notes in cases where the student cannot 'self-certify'.

vi) **University Chaplains**

For religious (or non-religious) students, the chaplains can be a useful source of support. The university has full-time Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic chaplains, and also has a list of key contacts for students of other faiths.

For information about this kind of support see:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/faith/>

vii) **Equality, Harassment, and Hate Crime**

A hate crime is any crime that is targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice towards that person's race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. A hate incident is any incident which may or may not constitute a criminal offence but is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

Hate crime isn't just physical abuse or violence, and an incident can have a lasting effect on a person. Abuse, name calling, assault, blackmail, harassment, intimidation, bullying or exploitation are all forms of hate crime. This includes abusive comments that are made by phone, text or through social media. Students can report such incidents here:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/help/hate-crime/#d.en.591148>

viii) **Students with Disabilities**

Specific support and advice for students with disabilities or specific learning support needs can be obtained from disabilityservices@york.ac.uk.

ix) **Financial Issues**

Increasingly, students can suffer with significant financial problems. Central support is provided by the university, who will also help with access to hardship funds etc.

For full information see:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/finance/>

x) **LGBTQ+ Students**

University support for LGBTQ+ students is available from:

<https://yusu.org/your-voice/lgbtq>

External support for LGBTQ+ students is available from:

York LGBT Forum: <https://www.yorklgbtforum.org.uk/>

Stonewall: <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays: <http://www.fflag.org.uk/>

Urgent Cases

If you have serious concerns about the physical or mental health of a student you should discuss this urgently with one of the staff within Student Support Services and/or a member of their College welfare team.

Exceptional Circumstances

If students miss significant amounts of work owing to their problems, it is their responsibility to fill in an exceptional circumstances form for consideration by the examiners. This is then considered at the module level, and if approved, the student will be allowed to resit the examination *as if for the first time* in the resit period. You should remind your supervisee of this.

For details of the policy see:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/mitigation/>

Support for Supervisors

Supervisors should be aware that dealing with students in distress can be a very stressful experience. Supervisors can also seek support in such cases, either from Chair of Board (DAW) or Head of Department (CED).

There is also a university staff counselling service that can help with any issues staff may wish to discuss in confidence – this wholly independent service works on the basis of initial telephone counselling, which can be followed-up by face-to-face counselling.

<https://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/browse/health-and-well-being/employee-assistance>

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