UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
Student Support
MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS INTERVENTION POLICY
Students causing concern/ students at risk

1. Introduction

1.1 The University of Essex wishes to ensure that all students who experience mental health or emotional difficulties are treated fairly, sensitively and with respect and are offered support and guidance in order to restore their wellbeing and for them to succeed at their studies. Furthermore, the University also has responsibility under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) not to discriminate against students with disabilities, including mental health problems, and to make reasonable adjustments to ensure students with disabilities are not placed at a disadvantage. However, there is increasing awareness within Higher Education of the need for institutions to respond appropriately to situations where visible signs of mental health difficulties, psychological or emotional disorders are having a disturbing and negative impact on the functioning of the individual and on the well-being of those around them.

1.2 It is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of students with mental health problems are unlikely to present any disruption to others. In many cases the University will not be aware a student has past or current mental health issues. However, it is important to have clear guidelines as to how to respond to the few cases each year where a student’s behaviour impacts on others around them because it places them at risk or the student themselves appears to be at risk. When such circumstances arise the needs and rights of the student concerned must be balanced against the need to protect the well-being of fellow students and staff.

2. Purpose of the Policy

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a co-ordinated and managed response to situations where a student’s behaviour is causing concern, because it is disruptive, aggressive or they appear to be at serious risk and where it is not considered appropriate to apply University disciplinary procedures because the root of the problem appears to be mental health related.
• To enable staff to identify the limits to the support they can provide and the appropriateness of referring the student on to other agencies, either internal or external. Any support provided by University staff cannot be expected to replace the professional care and support which are the responsibility of the student’s GP and other statutory agencies.

2.2 This policy is underpinned by the following:

• Awareness of the importance of effective communication in delivering this policy
• Using all available resources to inform decision making
• Training and development of staff that is ongoing
• Good quality record-keeping to ensure accurate information is available currently and subsequently.

3. Confidentiality

3.1 The importance of maintaining confidentiality should be considered in every situation, in accordance with the Student Support Confidentiality Policy.

4. Emergencies

4.1 In a situation where it is believed that a student’s behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or others, staff or students at the Colchester Campus should contact the Patrol Office staff on ext. 2222 and ask that an ambulance or the police are called and for a member of Patrol Office staff to attend. During out-of-hours the Associate Dean on call should be alerted by the Patrol staff. At other sites, the emergency services should be called by dialling 999. People should leave the area immediately if they feel that their safety is being endangered by a distressed person’s behaviour. New people should be discouraged from entering the area.

4.2 Following an emergency incident, the Director of Student Support and the Deputy Director of Student Support (Wellbeing) should be informed as soon as possible. The Patrol Office should keep a record of the action taken by emergency services and this should be passed on to the Director of Student Support and the Deputy Director (Wellbeing). The Deputy Director (Wellbeing) will be responsible for following up the incident, making contact with the student, if appropriate and informing concerned others, as appropriate in accordance with the Student Support Confidentiality Policy.

5. On-going Concern

5.1 Where a student’s behaviour or well-being is causing on-going concern, but not presenting any immediate crisis, the student
themselves should be approached and any concerns discussed with them directly. This approach, where possible, should be made by a member of staff who knows the student and the student should be given information in order that they can access student support services or get help through direct referral mental health services. Guidance can be sought, on a confidential basis, from the Wellbeing Service or the Health Centre at this stage as to how best to approach the student and to get information regarding sources of further help.

5.2 If a student is living in University accommodation, the Residents Support Network can initiate and maintain contact, assess the situation and liaise with Student Support, as appropriate.

6. Disruptive Behaviour or Behaviour Otherwise Giving Cause for Concern

6.1 If a student refuses to access support and is exhibiting behaviour which is causing concern (e.g. displaying bizarre or irrational behaviour, threatening to self-harm.), the Deputy Director (Wellbeing) should be informed. S/he will then coordinate and monitor a response to the situation. This response might involve arranging to see a student or calling a ‘case conference’ involving concerned parties where a cohesive response can be developed. The aim, wherever possible, being to ensure that a student is able to continue with their studies.

6.2 If it is deemed necessary to seek the intervention of the student’s GP or local community mental health services in order that responsibility can be shared, this will be done through Student Support.

6.3 If appropriate, support will also be offered by the Wellbeing team to those students and colleagues who may be affected by the situation. A central file will be kept in Student Support of all referrals, action and developments in the case and relevant colleagues will be updated on a ‘need to know’ basis and in keeping with the Wellbeing and Student Support Confidentiality Policies.

7. Suspension or Exclusion of Student

7.1 Where a student has been causing serious concerns because of a mental health problem and the university’s duty of care to others needs to be considered, it may be necessary to suspend a student from their studies while appropriate means of addressing the situation are considered. Furthermore, a student may need to be excluded from the campus, if appropriate. The decision to suspend or exclude a student would be made by the Vice-Chancellor following a recommendation from the Director of Student Support. If such a decision was taken, the procedures set out in the Appendix A to this document would be followed, which are based
upon the procedures for such action taken by the Vice-Chancellor under Section C of the University’s Disciplinary Procedures.

7.2 This step would only be taken if a student’s behaviour is impacting adversely on others around them and that either support in dealing with this has been offered and declined or that support has been put in place but behaviour which is unacceptable has continued and/or is beyond the professional competence of the University to manage.

7.3 Where a student is living in University accommodation and their behaviour is affecting other student’s living and working conditions, the student may be required to move to alternative accommodation.

7.4 Where the student’s next of kin/emergency contact is not able to be involved in the practical arrangements (e.g. to assist the student in making arrangements to return home) Student Support will endeavour to provide a reasonable level of support in carrying out these tasks.

8. Return to Study

8.1 Following a period of suspension or intermission because of mental health problems, confirmation by a doctor of the student’s fitness to study must be provided. The University may require the student to see a doctor of the University’s choosing and at the University’s expense.

8.2 The Wellbeing team in Student Support will be available to provide assistance and will draw up a ‘return to study’ plan in consultation with the student and his/her department in order to ensure that support is in place to try to prevent a reoccurrence of the events which led the student to intermit. This will address the specific study-related support needs of the student in returning to education, the support which is reasonably required in the short term, involvement and liaison with external agencies and any longer term support or adjustments that are reasonably required.

9. Further Information

9.1 Further information on this procedure including appeals procedures and the support available for students with mental health difficulties is available from the Deputy Director of Student Support (Wellbeing).

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Greenwood House
APPENDIX A: The Power to Suspend or Exclude a Student Temporarily

1. The Vice-Chancellor may suspend or exclude temporarily a student whose behaviour is causing serious concern, because it is disruptive, aggressive or the student appears to be at serious risk. The power shall be used where it is not considered appropriate to apply the University disciplinary procedures because the root of the problem appears to be mental health related.

2. The power to suspend or exclude temporarily under this provision exists to protect the members of the University community in general or a particular member or members, including the student in question. The power shall be used only where the Vice-Chancellor is of the opinion that it is necessary to take such action. Written reasons for the decision shall be recorded and notified to the student together with any conditions that need to be met before the suspension or exclusion can be lifted.

3. Subject to paragraph 4, no student shall be suspended or excluded by the Vice-Chancellor unless he or she has been given an opportunity to make written representations to the Vice-Chancellor.

4. In cases of great urgency, the Vice-Chancellor shall be empowered to suspend or exclude a student with immediate effect, provided that the opportunity mentioned in paragraph 3 is offered and the matter is reviewed within five days where written representations are received.

5. At the request of the student in question, a decision by the Vice-Chancellor to invoke this power shall be reviewed where it has continued for four weeks. Such a review will not necessarily involve a hearing or submissions made in person, but the student shall be entitled to submit written representations. The review will be conducted by three members of the Senate.

6. Where a student subject to a temporary suspension or exclusion made under this provision lives in University owned or administered accommodation, the University may require the student to move to alternative accommodation with immediate effect.

7. For sites owned, leased or managed by the University away from the Colchester campus, the Vice-Chancellor’s power to suspend or exclude temporarily under this provision is delegated to the senior office-holder of that campus, provided the case is referred to the Director of Student Support within 48 hours of a decision to suspend or exclude being taken. Written reasons for the decision shall be recorded and notified to the student. The delegated power to suspend or exclude shall be exercised in accordance with the provisions laid out in paragraphs 1 to 6 above. In all cases where the delegated power is exercised, the student has the right to make written representations to the Vice-Chancellor.

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