

Signposting Student Support

A Guide for Partner Staff



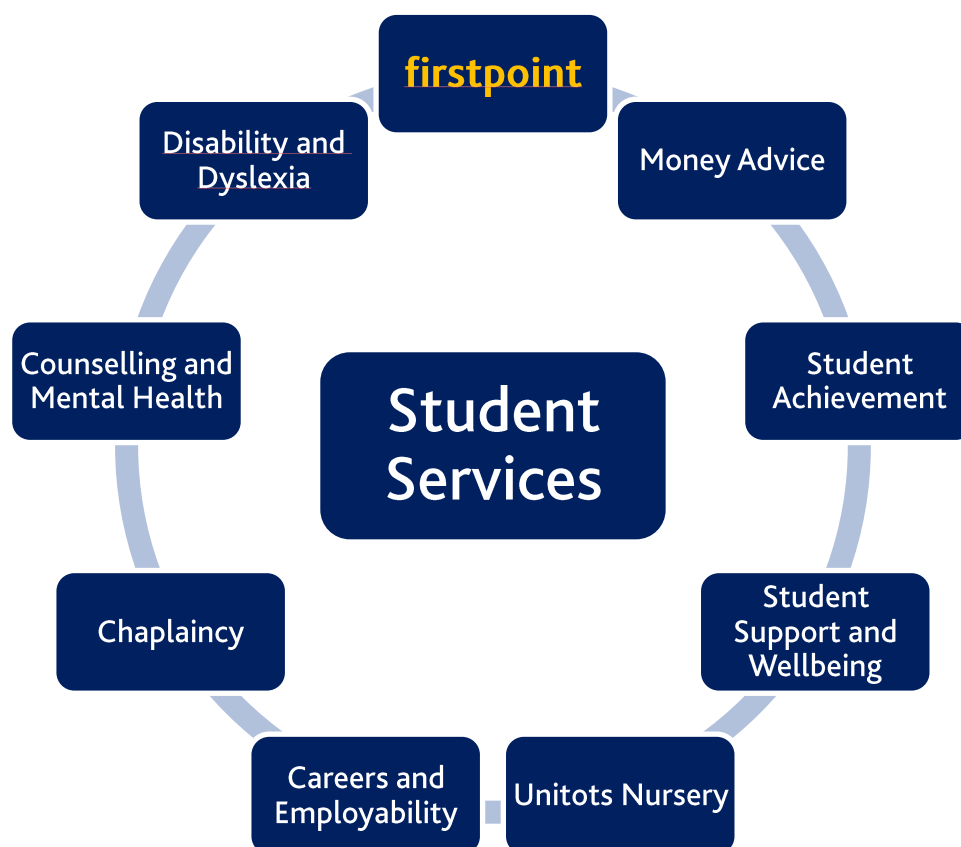
University
of Worcester
Student Services

Contents

Introduction	3
How to refer a student.....	4
How to be a good supporter (and manage boundaries).....	5
How to respond when a parent/ guardian contacts you about a student	6
When a student needs help with a careers enquiry	7
When a student is a care leaver, carer, or estranged from their parents	8
When a student is experiencing conflict.....	9
When a student is a victim of crime	10
When a student has committed a crime/is being investigated by the police	11
When a student dies	12
When a student has a disability, dyslexia, a long-term medical condition, or a temporary disability	13
When a student makes a disclosure of a sexual assault, rape or domestic violence	14
When a student reports discrimination, victimisation or harassment	15
When a student is experiencing distress	16
When a student is not engaging in their studies	17
When a student is undergoing gender transition	19
When a student is homeless.....	20
When a student needs money advice or help with a finance enquiry	21
When a student has a mental health or emotional difficulty	22
When a student is pregnant.....	23
When a student needs help with their academic development or study skills.....	24
When a student is considering withdrawing from the university.....	25
When a student needs other help, advice or support.....	26
Useful Contacts	27
Supporting students in distress -flowchart	28

Introduction

This guide is designed to ensure that you can, quickly and confidently, direct students to the advice and support they need, when they need it. **Student Services** at University of Worcester offers a range of support and advice on all aspects of student life, through the services we provide to UW students. This is in addition to the support provided by the student's home institution:



This *Signposting Student Support Guide for Partner Staff* covers a range of the support available from **Student Services** and other sources, focusing particularly on those services and situations we are most frequently asked about by colleagues. It outlines some of the key signs and behaviours to look out for to help you spot a student who may need additional support, provides practical guidance on what action you might need to take, and finally indicates what might happen once a referral is made.

We welcome your feedback about this guide. We know it does not cover everything, but hope it is a helpful starting point for sharing information on how we can work together to support our students to succeed. We will be reviewing and adding to it over time, so that it becomes your essential reference point for all the information you need to help students to access the right support. Contact us at ssn@worc.ac.uk to let us know what you think about the guide, and what else you would like us to cover in the future.

This guide is available online at <https://www.worc.ac.uk/community/partner-staff.html>

Check online for the latest guidance.

How to refer a student

What might you need to know?

Throughout this document you will find information about where to refer students if they encounter specific difficulties or challenges. In many cases students are keen to resolve the problems they are experiencing, and raising the issue with a member of staff can be the first positive step towards getting things sorted out.

Some students however, may be reluctant to access help and support. They may find approaching a member of staff or contacting support services challenging for any number of reasons.

Remember that it is the students' right to choose who they talk to and what information can be shared, unless they are a risk to themselves or to others.

What should you do?



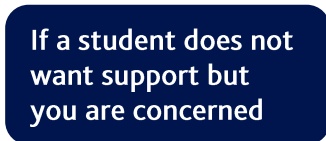
Reassure them that **Student Services** are there to support them, and encourage them to contact **firstpoint** where they can arrange access to a range of support. They can call in, or phone **01905 542551** during opening hours (8:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday), email firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or visit the web pages at: www.worcester.ac.uk/firstpoint where they can find comprehensive information on all the available services.

This guide may help you to identify which service(s) may be most relevant to the student's circumstances, but this may not always be possible or appropriate. **firstpoint** staff can provide support, or help signpost students to the right service(s) once they have made contact.



Ask the student's permission to make contact on their behalf. Provided they have given consent, you will then be able to inform a colleague in **Student Services** either by phoning **firstpoint: 01905 542551**, or emailing: firstpoint4staff@worc.ac.uk

It is best for students to seek help independently, but sometimes you may feel that an intervention on their behalf, with their permission, is the best way forward.



Contact **firstpoint** (as above) or the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service** by emailing: studentlife@worc.ac.uk They will advise on the situation without reference to the student's name, and you can then decide how to proceed.

If you consider yourself or others to be at risk, leave the student and vacate the area as quickly and calmly as possible. Alert security and ask them to contact emergency services, or let them know if you have dialled 999.

What happens next?

Students contacting **firstpoint** will be guided to the appropriate support or provided with relevant information and advice. If your contact is on behalf of a student, with their permission to share information, we will follow this up and encourage them to engage with support. We will not usually be able to update you on the support that has been provided, as this will be treated confidentially, but you can contact us again if the situation does not improve.

How to be a good supporter (and manage boundaries)

What might you need to know?

Setting and maintaining professional boundaries with students is an important part of establishing a supportive relationship, where the limits of your role and responsibilities are clear, and emotional wellbeing is protected for both you and the students. Boundaries will vary depending on your role in a given situation; if for example, you are meeting a student as a Personal Academic Tutor, then this role should inform the extent of support and guidance you offer. For some colleagues this may be quite different from the relationship they might develop as a practitioner in their own area of expertise.

What should you do?

If a student demands too much of your time

Be clear at the start and towards the end of meeting with a student about how much time is available, and ensure it finishes on time.

With some students it may be helpful to give a 'count-down' during the meeting, so they know how much time they have left.

If a student makes frequent requests for meetings and other forms of contact

Suggest they talk to a **firstpoint** Adviser. They can do this by: phone: **01905 542551**, email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting the **Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus** between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Students often have academic or personal/social issues they wish to discuss with tutors, or other staff, with whom they have developed trust. This is normal, and the extent to which requests are met is a matter for professional judgement. However if a student asks for more than can be reasonably fulfilled, it may be appropriate to suggest that they seek guidance/support from the University's Support Services, or from appropriate external services (e.g. GP. Debt Advice Services, Benefits advice).

If a student contacts you outside of working hours

If students make contact outside normal working hours, remind them of the usual ways in which they can arrange to speak to you. In an emergency, it is appropriate to briefly refer them to more suitable emergency services (the police; their GP or A&E department).

Individual working hours may vary, but if you receive emails from students late at night, it may be helpful to delay delivery of any response until the next working day. It is University policy that you should never use a personal email account for conducting University business (please refer to the [Information Security policy](#)).

What happens next?

If a student is recommended to seek guidance/support from **Student Services**, we will not be able to update you because of the confidential nature of our relationship with the students, but they will be offered personalised guidance and support as detailed throughout this guide.

How to respond when a parent/ guardian contacts you about a student

What might you need to know?

Parents, relatives and other third parties often contact the University to ask for information about students. Because we have a duty, under the Data Protection Act 1998, to protect the privacy of our students, we are not permitted to disclose any information about them, even to their parents, without specific authorisation in advance from the student. This includes not being able to confirm whether the student is, or has been, studying with us. We can, however provide general information about support and services available to students.

What should you do?

If a parent/guardian contacts you and asks about a student

Explain that we are not able to discuss individual students as they are independent adults and we have a duty to protect their privacy.

Keep any discussion general, referring to our policies, procedures and support systems but avoiding any reference to individual students, e.g.: "I can't talk about an individual student, but I can tell you that students are welcome to talk to me if they have any concerns about their studies"

If a parent/guardian is concerned about lack of contact from their child or about their wellbeing/mental health

Explain that students can be very busy and often contact home less frequently than their family might expect.

Tell them that we have plenty of support available for students which they can access through **firstpoint**.

If a parent/guardian is contacting you urgently outside normal working hours with their concerns

Explain that students often forget to phone home when they are settling in, and reassure them that students can access a variety of support through **firstpoint**.

If a parent/guardian is contacting you about their child's finances, living circumstances, course or other University matter

Advise them to contact **firstpoint** by: phone: 01905 542551, or email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk

You can also direct them to the relevant webpages:

- [Money Advice](#)
- [Student Support & Wellbeing](#)
- [Accommodation](#)
- [Study Skills](#)

What happens next?

firstpoint will be able to provide reassurance about support that is available to students. The student will be offered support where necessary and encouraged to contact their parent/guardian, but we will not normally do this on their behalf unless they are a danger to themselves or others. We will not confirm that anyone is a student at the University to a third party, but we can tell parents/guardians that where concerns have been raised about students this will normally be followed up by a wellbeing check.

When a student needs help with a careers enquiry

What might you need to know?

Worcester has an excellent employability record, with 94.9% of last year's leavers finding work or further study: well above the national graduate average. Students may be offered a range of employability activities within their course, including work experience, professional development, job application skills and industry links. Students may also look for more specific help with finding part time work, improving their employability, making decisions about career paths, and completing job applications. Our dedicated **Careers and Employability Service** is here to complement these embedded employability activities, and support our students to develop the skills and abilities they will need for a successful and fulfilling career.

The Worcester Award is an employability award which allows students to record extra-curricular activities during their time with us, and gain an award which is recognised on their HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record), which they can show to employers.

What should you do?

If a student is looking for a job, needs a psychometric test, or wants a Careers Quick Guide

Advise them to contact **firstpoint** by: phone: 01905 542551, email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting the Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Students can also get information from the Careers Service webpage: www.worc.ac.uk/careers

If a student wants specific careers advice or help with an application

Suggest that they make an appointment with a Careers Adviser. Appointments can be booked online at: www.timecenter.com/worcester

Staff can contact the Careers Service by: phone: 01905 855166, or email: careers@worc.ac.uk

If a student has questions about the Worcester Award

Advise them to email: worcesteraward@worc.ac.uk, or phone: 01905 855354.

Students can also get answers to Worcester Award FAQs from the Careers Service webpage: www.worc.ac.uk/careers

What happens next?

Careers Advisers can help with a wide range of issues such as career planning and where to find work, as well as giving one to one support with job applications and mock interviews on request. When students pick up a Worcester Award log book and register online, the Worcester Award team will contact them with further information and to discuss their progress. Students may want to meet with Careers Advisers more than once as they progress through their course, and **Careers and Employability** will continue to offer support to graduates for up to three years after they leave.

When a student is a care leaver, carer, or estranged from their parents

What might you need to know?

Students who have care experience or are estranged from their parents may not disclose this to you directly. They may imply this by suggesting that they do not have the traditional support network that other students have, or by being vague about their plans for holiday periods or occasions when other students might be returning to their family homes.

Students with caring responsibilities may sometimes miss lectures, or be unable to keep up with assignment deadlines. They may be combining caring with part-time work as well as their study, and could be struggling financially.

What should you do?

If a student tells you that they are a care leaver, carer or estranged from their parents

Try to remain supportive but neutral, avoiding being overly sympathetic or offering additional support that may be inappropriate. Each student's situation will be different.

Make sure the student knows that this is a diverse community, and that there is a range of support available to all students, whatever their background or circumstances.

If a student wants to speak to someone or would like some support

Suggest that they contact the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service**. They can do this by: phone: 01905 542241, email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk, or they can contact the team via **firstpoint**.

There is information available at: www.worcester.ac.uk/student-support Financial information for Care Leavers and estranged students is also available from www.worc.ac.uk/moneyadvice/careleavers

What happens next?

A Student Support Adviser will be able to discuss with the student the level and type of support that they would like. This might be regular one-to-one meetings or may just be having a named contact should they need someone to talk to. Information on other services or people that the student may wish to refer to such as **Counselling and Mental Health**, **Money Advice**, and the **Chaplaincy** would also be given. The **Chaplaincy** supports a number of isolated or vulnerable students, and arranges Christmas meals, with local church groups and families, for students who might otherwise be alone on Christmas day. The **Hardship Fund** is open to students who need extra financial support over the summer.

When a student is experiencing conflict

What might you need to know?

We all experience conflict in our lives at some point or another and with varying degrees of impact. For students conflict can arise in different ways and may affect how they interact with their peers, flat or housemates, friends, family and lecturers. Ongoing disputes can be stressful and tiring. Students experiencing persistent and ongoing conflict may disengage, withdrawing from contact with specific people on their course or avoiding working with specific groups. They may mention that they don't like to spend time at their accommodation or that they are spending increasing amount of time going home at the weekends.

What should you do?

If the student wants general advice

Direct the student to the Student Support web page for suggestions on how to manage conflict:
www.worc.ac.uk/studentsupport/communal-living

In most cases, disputes can be easily resolved. Suggest that they talk this through with someone they trust, and reassure them that support is available if they need it.

If the student wants support to resolve the conflict

Advise them to contact the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service**. They can do this by: phone: 01905 542241, email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk, or they can contact the team via **firstpoint**.

Formal and informal conflict resolution is available through the **Student Support and Wellbeing** team; including facilitated conversations and mediation.

What happens next?

The **Student Support & Wellbeing Service** will explore the options with the student and, if appropriate, other students who may be involved. If the dispute or conflict is with a non-student, the student will be supported to explore different ways to manage and, hopefully, to resolve the issues they are experiencing. Students can also be supported by our **Counselling and Mental Health Service** if the conflict is causing particular anxiety or distress.

When a student is a victim of crime

What might you need to know?

Worcester is regularly reported as one of the safest cities to live in, but it is possible that at some point a student will approach you looking for support as a victim of crime. A student might, for example, share with you the fact that they were a victim recently and have not yet reported this to anyone, or they might tell you that they are finding it difficult to cope with the after-effects of a crime that happened some time ago. Even crimes experienced some time in the past can have a significant effect on a student's day-to-day life and studies.

What should you do?

If the student has not reported the crime

Advise them that help is available at **firstpoint**, Monday-Friday 8.30am - 5.30pm. Make sure that they have the contact number for any local out of hours support in case they feel unsafe at any time.

In most cases, when a person is a victim of crime, it is their decision whether or not to report that crime. This can be a difficult decision. Suggest that they talk this through with someone they trust, and reassure them that support is available if they need it.

If the student wants support

Advise them to contact the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service**. They can do this by: phone: **01905 542241**, email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk, or they can contact the team via **firstpoint**.

Support can be provided whether or not they have reported the crime, and can sometimes help them decide what to do.

If you are concerned about a student's wellbeing

Staff can contact the duty member of the **Counselling and Mental Health Service** for advice on **01905 542832** every weekday from 2.00pm to 3.00pm. Other calls between 8.30-4.30 will be picked up when a member of staff is available.

If a student has revealed a crime to you which you believe involves ongoing risk to the student or others, contact **firstpoint** for advice. You can ask for advice without breaking confidentiality.

What happens next?

What happens next will depend on the circumstances of the case in question. Referring students to **Student Support and Wellbeing** for ongoing support will ensure that the student receives the help they need. In more serious cases, the University will liaise with local **Police** where appropriate. The student's right to confidentiality will be respected as far as our duty of care allows; in circumstances where we are required to share information because of the risk of harm to the student or others, this will normally be explained to the student in advance.

When a student has committed a crime/is being investigated by the police

What might you need to know?

A student may disclose to you that they have committed a crime that is either already being investigated by the Police or they may confide in you an act or conduct which constitutes a criminal offence. You may also become aware of this through social media or news reports. They may also refer to a crime which was committed before they came to University.

What should you do?

If the crime has not been reported to the Police

You may feel that this student poses an immediate threat to you or you may think it necessary to report this to the Police urgently. If you are still with the student, excuse yourself as calmly as you can and remove yourself from the situation. When you are safe, dial 999 asking for the Police.

In non-emergency situations, You may need to consider whether you need to refer to the [Safeguarding Policy](#) or the [Student with Criminal Records policy](#). You may wish to discuss the matter with your head of Safeguarding, or with your line manager if there could be implications for a student on a professional course.

If the crime is being investigated by the Police

Under the terms of the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or the [Fitness to Practise Procedures](#) for their course, you may be required to refer the student through a 'Notice of Formal Complaint' sent to the student's Head of Institute. The Student Community Wellbeing Service Manager will be able to discuss the process with you. Phone: 01905 855104, or email studentlife@worc.ac.uk

If the student wants support, advise them to contact the Student Support and Wellbeing Service by: phone: 01905 542241 or email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk or the Counselling and Mental Health service by email: cmh@worc.ac.uk or phone: 01905 542832.

What happens next?


If the conduct which constitutes a criminal offence has taken place on University premises, affects other members of the University community or damages the reputation of the University then the Vice Chancellor/Pro-Vice Chancellor of Students will decide whether disciplinary action should be taken under the Student Code of Conduct. The University will liaise with the Police where appropriate. The Head of Student Services will liaise with the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Students and the Assistant Director of Security to ensure that the safety of students, staff and the University community is maintained. Any students affected, including the perpetrator where appropriate, will be offered support.

When a student dies

What might you need to know?

Thankfully this is a relatively rare occurrence, but with a large population, sadly it is inevitable that there will occasionally be a student death. A death within the student community can have a very emotional impact on all those who knew the student, and the timing and circumstances can sometimes increase the impact on anyone affected.

What should you do?



The University would normally be notified of a student death either by the next of kin or by the Emergency services (usually the Police). If you are informed, or become aware, by another route, please report this to staff at your own institution, plus the Head of Student Services on: **01905 855059**, the Student Support Service Manager on: **01905 855104**, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students on: **01905 542769**, or the Academic Registrar on: **01905 857536**.

If you knew the student it will be helpful if you can provide any details you are aware of, such as their course, cohort, current/recent placements etc. when making the notification. This may be a distressing experience, so be aware of your own support needs, and make any others affected aware of the availability of support (see below).

What happens next?

The Head of Student Services, Student Support Service Manager or Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students will verify the details and ensure that all the appropriate colleagues are notified. They will also arrange for support to be offered to students and staff affected at UW. A senior member of the University will usually contact the next of kin to offer the University's condolences, and a representative will attend the funeral if appropriate.

The **Counselling and Mental Health Service** will make themselves available for any student needing to access their confidential service. In these circumstances, staff are also often offered an initial meeting with a **Student Services** Counsellor. Staff may also wish to refer themselves to **HR** who can arrange external Counselling, which is the normal route for staff support.

Students and staff affected will usually be contacted directly with an offer of support, or they can contact the **Counselling and Mental Health Service** by email: cmh@worc.ac.uk or phone: **01905 542832**.

When a student has a disability, dyslexia, a long-term medical condition, or a temporary disability

What might you need to know?

The University of Worcester prides itself on providing excellent support to disabled students. Around 12% of our student population has a disability, whether physical, sensory, specific learning difficulties (like dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia), autism or one of a range of medical conditions that require particular support. Some students may not yet have a diagnosis; others may become disabled during their time at university; and some students don't consider themselves disabled but may need support. Many disabled students find that previous strategies and coping mechanisms, which may have served them well during their time at school or college, do not work as well at university. Look out for students who have poor attendance, regularly submit work late, who seem to struggle with written elements of their course, display perfectionist tendencies, or frustration at the marks they are receiving, as they could potentially benefit from some additional support. We can also help with temporary disabilities, such as limited mobility following an accident or surgery, or recovery from serious illness.

What should you do?



Encourage them to make contact with the **Disability and Dyslexia Service**. They can do this by: phone: 01905 542551, email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting **firstpoint** in the **Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus** between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

We would recommend students contact **firstpoint** as soon as possible, rather than waiting until they encounter difficulties. We respect some students' preference not to seek support, but it is important that they understand the implications of this choice. For example, they may miss out on support at exam time, or may not achieve the marks they are capable of.



Suggest that they contact **firstpoint** as soon as possible.

It can take some time to assess and set up appropriate support, but there may also be advice and support that we can put in place quickly while the process gets underway.

What happens next?

firstpoint can advise, and book students for dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and ADHD assessments. Advisers can also answer a range of initial queries concerning disability and dyslexia support or arrange for a student to see a Disability Adviser for further guidance or assistance to develop and implement a support package. This might include: adaptations to accommodation, specialist equipment and support, or adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment. If needed, the student will receive a Letter of Entitlement, outlining any required adjustments, in liaison with their college to give to their academic tutors. With their consent, the information will also be made available to tutors via the class list on SOLE. If staff require further information or guidance on inclusive practice and reasonable adjustments, they can contact the **Disability and Dyslexia Service** by: email: disability@worc.ac.uk or phone: 01905 855531.

When a student makes a disclosure of a sexual assault, rape or domestic violence

What might you need to know?

It may be very difficult to tell that a student has been a victim of a sexual assault or domestic violence. People manage their emotions in very different ways. Some may become disengaged and lose interest in things whilst others may become angry and aggressive to those around them.

If you develop a trusting relationship with a student they may feel comfortable to open up to you, or they may disclose to you unexpectedly during the course of a conversation.

What should you do?



Take any disclosure seriously: remain calm and non-judgmental. Avoid asking probing questions that will encourage the student to provide you with too much information, or that will make the student think that you are doubting them.

The student will need expert support and guidance: aim to listen, rather than to provide specific advice. Signpost to appropriate information and services and encourage the student to seek specialist support.

Maintain confidentiality unless there is cause for concern about the immediate safety of the student, or of others.

Encourage the student to contact the college service or **Counselling and Mental Health Service** by email: cmh@worc.ac.uk, phone: 01905 542832, or via **firstpoint** for an urgent appointment, and make them aware of the [University's Policy on Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Stalking](#), which provides further information. Make a record of the conversation as accurately as possible. Keep this secure and confidential. If the student does decide to report it to the Police then these notes may be required as evidence, which is why it is important to reflect the student's words and not to use leading questions.



If the student discloses an incident that has occurred very recently, or feels that they, or others, are at risk, then, with the student's permission, contact your local Police on their non-emergency number 101, or on 999 if necessary.

If you feel that there is an immediate risk to others, but the student does not give permission to share, you should inform them that it is necessary to break confidentiality, and contact your Head of Safeguarding.

What happens next?

The **Counselling and Mental Health Service** could meet with the student as soon as possible. They will provide support, referring the student to other internal or external services as necessary. Unless there is an immediate risk to the student or others, they will be supported to make their own decision about whether to report any incident(s) to the Police. If they decide to do so, they will be supported throughout the process, and the Counsellors and Mental Health Advisers can provide expert evidence if required.

When a student reports discrimination, victimisation or harassment

What might you need to know?

Whilst universities are, by their very nature, liberal and inclusive environments, there is always a risk that a student may feel they have been discriminated against. Discriminatory behaviour can have a serious negative impact on the individual, as well as being morally and legally unacceptable. The University is committed to equality and inclusion and takes allegations of discrimination, victimisation or harassment very seriously.

People being discriminated against often feel worried about coming forward, so look out for signs of withdrawal, fall-off in academic performance or lecture attendance, lack of interaction with a group as a whole or with particular individuals, and avoidance of certain situations.

What should you do?



Advise them to contact the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service**. They can do this by: phone: 01905 542241, email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk, or they can contact the team via **firstpoint**.

Reassure the student that the University takes a strong stance against any discrimination or victimisation, and that their concerns will be listened to and taken seriously. Assure them that no student will be treated less favourably for raising such concerns.



Advise them to contact the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service** or to contact a Safeguarding officer

What happens next?

As well as ensuring that the student is offered any support they might require, the Student Support Advisers will be able to signpost the student to any relevant complaints procedure or to the **Students' Union**, as appropriate. Where necessary (and respecting confidentiality), they will also discreetly contact any other students they believe may be involved or affected and in need of support.

If you, as a member of staff, would like advice on any aspect of good practice in relation to equality and diversity issues as they relate to students, the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service** can assist via email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk or phone: 01905 542241.

When a student is experiencing distress

What might you need to know?

Most people experience some level of emotional distress at various points in their lives, and of course, university life may bring some additional challenges. Usually any difficulties can be resolved by the student talking them through with their family and friends, or in the case of academic concerns, with their Personal Academic Tutor.

If you are faced with a student who is distressed, making time to listen and take them seriously may be enough to help them to feel better and start to work out what course of action they might take. On most occasions, while the situation may be distressing for the student, it will not be an urgent matter.

Be aware of your own limits and boundaries relating to your role. You are not solely responsible for the student's emotional state, and you are not expected to provide support beyond your expertise, training and resources.

What should you do?



Acknowledge the student's distress and reassure them that you want to support them. Find a quiet space to meet them.
If the student phones you, try to get them to confirm where they are and who they are with.
Consider helping them to start an action plan to tackle what is distressing them.

Listen objectively, and take their concerns seriously. Give them space to explain what is going on.
Set a timeframe for the meeting, and explain that your discussion will be kept private unless you believe that anyone is in danger.
Agree a time to follow up with the student, or make a note to check on them later to see how they are and if they need further support.



Use this guide to identify appropriate support services and signpost clearly. If possible, encourage the student to make contact for themselves, but if necessary, provide support, such as offering to phone for an appointment while the student is with you.

Explain clearly to the student that the situation is outside your area of expertise, but that specialist help is available.
Students have a right to refuse support, or accept it and then later change their mind. Unless there is a significant risk of harm to the student or others, it is their responsibility to take the next step, but do encourage them.



It is important that you remain calm, and continue to maintain professional boundaries. When appropriate, remind the student of the available support highlighted in this Guide, and encourage them to seek help.

If it appears that the student is at immediate risk of harm, contact the Safeguarding team. Ask them to contact emergency services. Advise them of your location, your name and the name of the student. If necessary, dial 999.

What happens next?

You may wish to talk to a line manager or colleague after a difficult conversation. It may also be helpful to make a note of what was said so that you can refer back to it later if necessary (store notes securely). If some specific guidance would be helpful, contact **Counselling and Mental Health** on 01905 542832 or cmh@worc.ac.uk, or **Student Support and Wellbeing** on 01905 542241 or studentlife@worc.ac.uk.

When a student is not engaging in their studies

What might you need to know?

Students may have poor or no attendance at lectures, missed appointments with their Personal Academic Tutor or limited engagement with online resources / course requirements. Additionally they may have failed to submit one or more pieces of assessed work. They may also have lower levels of involvement than usual with the **Students' Union**, social events or fellow students. They may be in their room more than usual, or absent from their accommodation for long periods. Any of these behaviours may give cause for concern about the student's wellbeing or their likelihood of success.

What should you do?

Students who have missed lectures or have not submitted assessed work may be very anxious about whether they can re-engage with their course. Reassure them that there are usually plenty of options, and that support is available to help them find a way forward.



Suggest they contact their course tutor to discuss any challenges they may be experiencing. They can also advise them on their options if assessed work has not been submitted or has been failed.

If they need information on improving their study skills, please refer them to www.worcester.ac.uk/studyskills

If a student is experiencing personal issues that are preventing their engagement with their studies

Encourage them to speak to a **firstpoint** Adviser who can refer them to the appropriate service for support. They can do this by visiting the **Peirson Study and Guidance Centre**, **St John's Campus** between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday-Friday, calling: 01905 542551, or emailing: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk.

Depending on the student's situation, you might also consider suggesting that they self-refer to the **Counselling and Mental Health Service** by emailing: cmh@worc.ac.uk or phoning: 01905 542832, or the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service**, by emailing: studentlife@worc.ac.uk or phoning: 01905 542241.

What happens next?

Where possible, students will be supported to re-engage with their studies, with appropriate support to keep them on track. Sometimes they may need help with applying for mitigating circumstances, or asking for a temporary withdrawal until they are ready to pick up their studies again. Occasionally it is best for the student to withdraw from the course, but this is still better done in a supported process to maintain the student's wellbeing as well as ensuring that they are not subject to any more financial commitment than necessary, and fully understand the implications and their options for the future.

When a student has a query relating to faith, belief or religion

What might you need to know?

Coming to university is an exciting time for students and brings with it greater freedom to question the world around them and their place in it. For many this may mean exploring issues of faith, perhaps questioning their own beliefs, or exploring new ideas and possibilities. As a University, we also need to be aware of our responsibilities for responding to practical issues of faith observance on campus and requests from students for adjustments. Students may come to you with a variety of questions about faith.

What should you do?



Suggest that they contact the **Chaplaincy**. They can do this by emailing: chaplaincy@worc.ac.uk, by contacting **firstpoint** on 01905 542551, or by visiting the **Peirson Study and Guidance Centre**, **St John's Campus** between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday-Friday.

The **Chaplaincy** offers support to students of all faiths and none. Further information is available from the Chaplaincy and Faith Advice webpage: www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/chaplaincy

What happens next?

The **Chaplaincy** offers a range of faith services to support students, whether they are a member of a faith group or belong to no faith tradition. The **Chaplaincy** Service can offer information on local places of worship including churches, gurdwaras, mosques and synagogues, and can signpost to other **Student Services**, such as **Counselling and Mental Health** and **Student Support and Wellbeing** where appropriate.

When a student is undergoing gender transition

What might you need to know?

The number of trans and non-binary students who seek help with gender transition or who are questioning their gender at the University has increased in line with the national trend. Not all students who identify as transgender will ask for the same level of support, however the University is able to offer services that are beneficial to anyone questioning their gender identity or in the process of gender reassignment.

Further information about transgender staff and students in higher education may be found at www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/trans-staff-and-students-in-he-revised-2010.pdf

What should you do?



Try to remain calm and neutral in your response. Listen to the person - a non-judgemental ear will help considerably. Respect their boundaries regarding any questions which might be considered personal.

Encourage them to speak to a **firstpoint** advisor who can refer them to the appropriate services. Alternatively they can contact the **Counselling and Mental Health Service** for confidential support on 01905 542832, or email: cmh@worc.ac.uk, or the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service**, by emailing: studentlife@worc.ac.uk or phoning: 01905 542241.



It will help to ask what they may need to help accommodate them- including preferred name and pronoun. This may change as the individual progresses, so staff should be prepared for these preferences to be amended over time. Gender reassignment is one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and the protection begins from the time that they indicate their intention to start the process.

Some students will wish to keep their decisions and plans private, or restrict those who know about them; others may wish to disclose to their peers. There is no right way for this to happen and it is best to discuss with the student and agree a plan that suits the circumstances. Adjustments may need to be considered if the student opts for medical treatment (hormones and/or surgery) which could affect their studies.



Think of the student as being the gender that they want you to think of them as, and use their preferred name and pronoun. Respect their privacy and don't tell others about their trans status without their express permission, and for a legitimate purpose.

At an appropriate point, and with their permission, it will be necessary to update records to reflect the student's current name and gender. This may include replacing old records to remove reference to their birth gender. **firstpoint** can advise on the process for updating central records. Email: firstpoint4staff@worc.ac.uk or phone: 01905 542551

What happens next?

Students referred to the **Counselling and Mental Health Service**, **firstpoint** or **Student Support & Wellbeing** will be offered support to suit their needs, which may change over time. Support staff can help them to liaise with **Registry Services** over any changes to name and/or gender in the central records. They can also advise on external support services.

When a student is homeless

What might you need to know?

Homelessness can take many forms. The definition provided by the charity Shelter defines homelessness as occurring when someone is living in unsuitable housing, has no rights to stay where they are or is sleeping rough. Students can encounter many different issues with their accommodation that can be compounded by their personal circumstances and complex life events. It is possible that a student facing or experiencing homelessness is also experiencing other challenges (e.g. financial, relationship breakdown, family estrangement) which means there are significant pressures on them.

You may notice they are not as focused, more tired in classes and possibly taking less care with their appearance. They may disengage with their studies. A student may even tell you they are sleeping on a friend's floor, that they are "sofa surfing" or sleeping in their car.

What should you do?



Suggest that they contact the **Student Support & Wellbeing Service** as soon as possible. They can do this by phone: **01905 542241** or email:

studentlife@worc.ac.uk

Reassure them that this is not a unique situation, and that help is available.

They may be concerned about whether this will affect their student status, so do explain that it need not affect their studies with the right help and support in place.

If the student is reluctant to make contact try to remain neutral and supportive. It is their choice who they tell, but do remind them that support is available. If they choose not to engage with internal support services, suggest that they might want to approach local external services.

What happens next?

The **Student Support & Wellbeing Service** will arrange for the student to talk to a Student Support Adviser. They will seek to identify the services needed to support that student (e.g. **Accommodation, Money Advice, Counselling and Mental Health**) and work with them to support their involvement with the student, including identifying short term emergency accommodation if necessary. They can also refer to external services, such as the **Worcester Housing and Benefits Advice Centre**.

When a student needs money advice or help with a finance enquiry

What might you need to know?

Money is a concern for many students and can have a big impact on their academic performance and general wellbeing. The beginning and end of semesters can be particularly stressful as loans might not have been received, or money may have run out. Look out for signs of worry, a drop in performance, missed academic commitments, or even talk of leaving university, as possible clues that one of your students is struggling financially.

What should you do?

	Direct them to the Money Advice webpage: www.worcester.ac.uk/moneyadvice or to www.gov.uk/studentfinance which is the main national website for information on loans and support with living costs.	Avoid offering financial advice yourself as rules, regulations and assistance change regularly.
	Suggest they talk to a firstpoint Adviser. They can do this by: phone: 01905 542551 , email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting the Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.	If there are specific concerns that the student wants to discuss, such as a late student loan, or outstanding debts, suggest that they bring the documents or evidence with them.
	Advise them to contact firstpoint as soon as possible. We strongly discourage students from accessing Payday loans or 'loan sharks' which can attract exorbitant interest rates and lead to a cycle of debt.	There may be a number of ways in which we can help, but be aware that emergency loans are only available in exceptional cases.
	As long as they are a home or EU student paying fees directly to the University, suggest that they apply for help from the University's Access to Learning ('Hardship') Fund . More details are available at firstpoint or from the web page: https://www.worc.ac.uk/moneyadvice/accesstolearningfund.htm	The fund can help undergraduate, postgraduate, part-time or full-time students studying in Worcester or at a partner college (providing the fees are paid to the University), and even students who have taken a temporary withdrawal from their course. Awards take into account all the student's circumstances, and can help with unavoidable shortfalls, or unexpected costs, based on a detailed assessment.

What happens next?

A **firstpoint** Adviser will ask the student for details of the enquiry, and resolve it immediately if they can. However, should the student or the Adviser feel that specialist advice is required, an appointment with a Money Adviser will be made. If required, Money Advisers will liaise with external agencies such as Student Finance and benefits agencies, and can also offer students advice and information on how to budget. The student will be advised of any financial support that they may be eligible for, including the Access to Learning Fund, and help them with the application process if necessary.

When a student has a mental health or emotional difficulty

What should you look out for?

According to the National Union of Students, 20% of students consider themselves to have a mental health condition, with as many as 92% reporting feelings of mental distress at some point during their studies. Many of these feelings such as anxiety, low mood, or of not fitting in can affect us all from time to time, but when they become overwhelming or start to have a serious impact on a student's studies and day-to-day life, the student is likely to benefit from support from the **Counselling and Mental Health Service**.

What should you do?



Suggest they complete a self-referral form for the **Counselling and Mental Health Service** at:

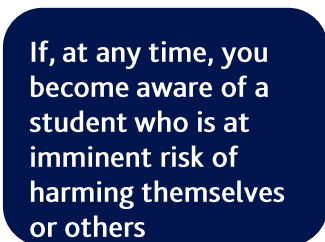
<https://ucw.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/counselling-mental-health-self-referral>

The Service can also be accessed by email: cmh@worc.ac.uk or phone: 01905 542832.

Advise the student that they can also access support through their GP, and that if they don't feel they can keep themselves safe at any time they should dial 999 or go to an A&E department.



Staff can contact the duty member of the **Counselling and Mental Health Service** for advice on 01905 542832 every weekday from 2.00pm to 3.00pm. Other calls between 8.30-4.30 will be picked up when a member of staff is available or returned if you leave a message.



If, at any time, you become aware of a student who is at imminent risk of harming themselves or others

Contact your local Safeguarding Officer. Ask them to contact emergency services. Advise them of your location, your name and the name of the student. If necessary, dial 999.

If you consider yourself or others to be at risk, leave the student and vacate the area as quickly and calmly as possible. Alert the Safeguarding Officer and ask them to contact emergency services, or let them know if you have dialled 999.

What happens next?

All three routes are designed to ensure that the student receives the support they need. Once a student completes a referral form, the **Counselling and Mental Health** team will normally contact them within two working days. The student's support needs will be assessed, and counselling and/or mental health support will be offered. This may vary from a one-off workshop or 1:1 session to long-term, regular support. Waiting times for support sessions will vary depending on the time of year and the student's availability, but if their need is assessed as urgent, an appropriate plan will be put in place quickly, including external (NHS) support if necessary.

When a student is pregnant

What might you need to know?

For many of our students, pregnancy might be part of their planned future, but for some it may be an unplanned event. They may appear distracted and anxious, they may have trouble concentrating, or their academic performance may be affected. They may also need to take frequent breaks or may find it uncomfortable to be in environments that are either very hot or cold, or around particular food or drinks. Pregnant students may also be concerned about finishing their course, and/or whether they can take a break from their studies.

What should you do?

	Try to remain neutral in your language and gauge how the student is feeling about the pregnancy rather than expressing your own judgement of the situation.	Be aware that, if a student is confused about how this will affect them, congratulating them or expressing empathy might influence their own decision process, or cause distress.
	There is a list of FAQs on the Student Support and Wellbeing webpage that you can refer the student to: www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/documents/Student_pregnancy_and_maternity_information_for_students(1).pdf	Student pregnancy and maternity: guidance for staff is available from: www.worc.ac.uk/student-services/documents/Student_pregnancy_and_maternity_guidance_for_staff(1).pdf
	Suggest that they contact the Student Support and Wellbeing Service . They can do this by phone: 01905 542241, email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk , or they can contact the team via firstpoint by: phone: 01905 542551, email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting the Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.	Some students may also want to consider additional support through the Counselling and Mental Health Service . Suggest they complete a self-referral form at: https://ucw.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/counselling-mental-health-self-referral The Service can also be accessed by email: cmh@worc.ac.uk or phone: 01905 542832.

What happens next?

Student Support Advisers can discuss a support plan and complete a risk assessment. They can also assist the student in accessing other support services such as the **Counselling and Mental Health Service**, **Money Advice** and the **Registry Programme Advisers** so that they are fully informed of their options, and the impact on their studies. Student Support Advisers can offer ongoing support throughout the period of pregnancy, ensure that all of the required risk assessments are kept up to date and provide the student with information on health and wellbeing. They can also provide advice and support for students returning to their studies.

When a student needs help with their academic development or study skills

What might you need to know?

It is not unusual for students to struggle with their studies and assignments, whether they are joining University from school or returning to study after some time. Look out for students who would benefit from skills development to achieve their academic potential. Alternatively, students may be failing assessments, struggling to complete work on time or receiving low marks or feedback, suggesting that they should seek some additional support with their academic/study skills.

What should you do?

If a student is looking for study skills resources

Advise them to visit the study skills website www.worcester.ac.uk/studyskills where they can access study skill advice sheets and online resources to assist in their coursework and assessments. There are links to videos on critical evaluation and assignment planning as well as resources covering academic writing, maths and critical thinking etc.

Support is also available from the library at <https://library.worc.ac.uk/>

Students can also pick up hard copies of the advice sheets covering essay writing, making presentations, taking notes and working in groups etc. from **firstpoint** in the Peirson Study and Guidance Centre between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

If the student has specific study needs relating to a disability, such as dyslexia

Specialist support is available for study skills needs relating to Specific Learning Difficulties (such as dyslexia or dyspraxia), autistic spectrum disorders and other disabilities.

Advise the student to contact the **Disability and Dyslexia Service** by phone: 01905 542551, email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting **firstpoint**.

What happens next?

All students can access study skills support and resources throughout their period of study, at a time that is most relevant to their needs. Students needing disability related support will be offered specialist 1:1 appointments where appropriate.

When a student is considering withdrawing from their course

What might you need to know?

Students considering withdrawing from their course may appear anxious and distracted, less engaged with their course or peers, and may be absent from class, or miss other university commitments.

Many students who say that they would like to withdraw from the university change their mind after talking through their concerns with a Tutor or **firstpoint** Adviser. Whatever the reason for wanting to leave, and regardless of what they decide to do; it is important to ensure that they are fully informed of all of the options, implications, and available support, so they can make an informed decision that feels right for them.

What should you do?

If a student wants to speak to someone about their options and next steps

If possible, encourage them to talk to their course leader so that any concerns about their academic programme or progress can be addressed.

Alternatively, suggest that they contact a **firstpoint** Adviser. They can do this by: phone: **01905 542551** email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting the **Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus** between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

A **firstpoint** Adviser will normally offer a same day appointment, or will meet with/contact the student as soon as they can be available. They will help the student to explore any underlying issues, and provide information and support for the student to make the right decision for their circumstances. They can liaise with other services if necessary to ensure that, where possible, concerns and support needs are addressed to enable the student to continue studying.

If a student wants to withdraw immediately

Inform them that they must complete a *Withdrawal From Studies Form* online, but do remind them that support is available.

This is available from their **SOLE** page under the Course Information tab.

What happens next?

If the student books an appointment, the **firstpoint** Adviser will listen to their reasons for wanting to leave, and suggest alternative options such as changing mode of study from full to part time, changing course, or withdrawing temporarily. They will also discuss any support needs and make referrals to other services such as **Counselling and Mental Health**, the **Chaplaincy**, or the **Student Support and Wellbeing Service** if the student says that they want to stay, but are struggling to cope. If finance is the reason for wanting to leave, a referral to **Money Advice** might be made. Money Advisers can check that the student is in receipt of all available income, can signpost to trust funds and bursaries and will advise of their eligibility for the Access to Learning ('Hardship') Fund: a non-repayable grant available to students experiencing financial difficulty. Students may also be referred to **Careers and Employability** to discuss the career implication of their course change, or if they have been struggling to find part-time work to support their studies.

If a student completes the online *Withdrawal from Studies Form* on their **SOLE** page, this will be referred directly to **firstpoint**. An Adviser will contact the student and discuss the range of support that is available.

If, after considering all their options, the student does decide to leave, **firstpoint** Advisers will confirm the completed *Withdrawal From Studies Form*. They will be advised of any implications for accommodation costs, future study or funding.

When a student needs other help, advice or support

What else might you need to know?

This Guide will be extended over time to include a range of other ways in which students are advised and supported. You may come across any number of other situations which aren't specifically covered here, but most situations can be addressed through an initial referral to **firstpoint**. Staff or students may also find it helpful to refer to the **firstpoint** webpages: www.worcester.ac.uk/firstpoint

What should you do?

If a student has a general enquiry, needs support or guidance, or needs to access central services, including finance and accommodation

Advise them to contact **firstpoint** by: phone: 01905 542551, email: firstpoint@worc.ac.uk or by visiting the Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Students can also get information from this web page: www.worcester.ac.uk/your-home/get-support

If a student needs medical attention

They will need to make an appointment with their GP. We recommend that students register as soon as they arrive at university, but GPs will usually provide urgent appointments if necessary.

Where students and/or staff are at immediate risk of harm

Contact the Safeguarding Officer. Ask them to contact emergency services. Advise them of your location, your name and the details of the situation. If necessary, dial 999.

If you consider yourself or others to be at risk, leave the area as quickly and calmly as possible, ensuring that others leave the area if it is safe for you to do so. Alert the Safeguarding Officer and ask them to contact emergency services, or let them know if you have dialled 999.

If you need further guidance on supporting students

Contact: firstpoint4staff@worc.ac.uk

Refer to the **firstpoint** webpages: www.worcester.ac.uk/firstpoint

Useful Contacts

firstpoint	Peirson Study and Guidance Centre, St John's Campus. Open 8.30am-5.30pm, Monday to Friday Email (students): firstpoint@worc.ac.uk Email (staff): firstpoint4staff@worc.ac.uk	Phone: 01905 542551
Student Support and Wellbeing Service	Email: studentlife@worc.ac.uk	Phone: 01905 542241
Counselling and Mental Health Service	Email: cmh@worc.ac.uk	Phone: 01905 542832
Disability and Dyslexia Service	Email: disability@worc.ac.uk	Phone: 01905 855531
Samaritans	Email: jo@samaritans.org	Phone: 01905 21121 Or: 116 123 (free)
SANE		Phone: 0300 304 7000
Police		Phone: 101 (non-emergency) Phone: 999 (emergency)
NHS		Phone: 111 (non-emergency) Phone: 999 (emergency)

Supporting students in distress -flowchart

DO:

- Remain calm
- Put your safety first
- Encourage the student to access support
- Remember the boundaries of your role

DON'T:

- Promise confidentiality – you may have to alert others in order to keep the student safe
- Take responsibility for the student's wellbeing: they have a right to make their own decisions, within a supportive environment

