



L-Università  
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# Supporting Suicidal and/or Severely Distressed Students

STAFF GUIDELINES



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# INTRODUCTION

**A**s a caring community the **University** must contend with the fact that in most advanced societies, suicide and non-fatal suicidal behaviour are a public health concern. Early identification and effective care for those at risk, are crucial in ensuring people receive the care they need and deserve.

The original document was compiled and written by Dr Marta Sant, from the Department of Psychology, who took the lead to help the University develop these guidelines. Over the last years contextual changes necessitated the amendment of this protocol to meet current needs so we are publishing a second edition. We hope it will be useful for those who may find themselves unexpectedly dealing with such difficult circumstances.

Special thanks go to a team who contributed to the project including Prof. Paul A. Bartolo, Dr David Cassar, Dr Maureen Cole, Dr David Mamo, Ms Carmen Mangion and Rev. Dr John Vella.

My appreciation for feedback also goes to the Rector Prof. Alfred Vella, the Academic Registrar Dr Colin Borg, Dr Joe Cassar, and the counselling services professionals particularly Dr Joan Camilleri and Ms Charmaine Mifsud Cardona, Dr Angele Attard Chetcuti, Dr Annemarie Galea, Dr Roxanne Meilak Borg, Ms Stefania Agius Fabri and Ms Sara Zingariello, as well as Mr Stephen C. Vella from the Foundation for Social Welfare Services.

## **Prof. Carmen Sammut**

*Pro-Rector for Student and Staff Affairs and Outreach*

# FOREWORD

It may appear unduly pessimistic to think about suicide amongst the most precious members of the University community – our students. Suicide is generally not something we ordinarily contemplate. Yet, for some individuals, thoughts of ending their life can become all-consuming. For others, ending their life is an impulsive act that they hope will liberate them from a life that has become too painful to endure.

Openly discussing suicide can be scary, complex and challenging, especially if we are concerned that someone is at risk. How do we broach such a sensitive and anxiety-provoking conversation? This is all the more difficult when the person we are worried about is a student and therefore someone who is neither a friend nor a relative. However, the importance of being able to discuss suicide directly with students we are worried about is necessary and cannot be underestimated – as is knowing what to do if a student tells you that they have plans to harm themselves or end their life. These guidelines provide staff members at the University with the tools required to assist students who are severely distressed and/or at high risk of suicide. It is hoped that staff members will not need to make use of these guidelines, but it is also hoped that those who do, will find the guidelines helpful in supporting their students.

The guidelines are not intended to be static and feedback as to how they could be enhanced and improved has been incorporated in this document. In fact, this second edition of the guidelines reflects some issues which came to light during the COVID-19 pandemic, amongst others.

Compiling these guidelines and co-facilitating related workshops in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Centre has brought me into contact with diverse University staff members. These colleagues have shared their experiences of encountering suicidal and/or seriously distressed students. I am truly grateful for their candour and openness in discussing these experiences and the impact such experiences had on them, both personally and professionally. It is encouraging and moving to observe the care and concern members of staff have towards students.

I would also like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to Ms Charmaine Mifsud Cardona, Counselling Services Professional at the Health and Wellness Centre, for all her support, collegiality and constant assistance in revising these guidelines.

**Dr Marta Sant**

*Lecturer, Department of Psychology*

**2nd Edition, 2023**

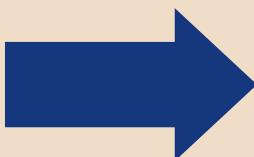
# How to respond to a student in severe mental/emotional distress

(adapted from Mental Health Policy and Guidelines, Trinity College, Dublin, 2008)

## Is the problem serious or urgent?

- ▶ Is there risk of harm to self or others?
- ▶ Is the person out of touch with reality?
- ▶ Can you observe any bizarre behaviour?
- ▶ Sudden behaviour, mood or personality change?

**YES**



## Emergencies

- ▶ Either you or another staff locate student and talk. Explain your concerns and worries.
- ▶ Contact Emergency 112 if there is high imminent risk of harm to self or others.

**NO**



## Non emergency Guidelines

If unsure, ask for advice from Counselling Unit (without disclosing student's name)

Arrange to talk to student

Explain concern and suggest support available.



### If student agrees with your concerns

Ask: are they seeing a helping professional?

If Yes, encourage student to contact professional and offer your support.

If No, suggest and organise together with the student an appointment with the Counselling Unit.

### If student not willing to accept help

Organise a follow up meeting and monitor

Mention support again

## Student is willing to accept help and not at risk

If student agrees with your concerns: Ask if they are seeing a helping professional?

If Yes, encourage student to contact professional and offer your support.

If No, suggest and organise together with the student an appointment with the Counselling Unit.

## Student unwilling to accept help

If student not willing to accept help, explain that due to concerns about their/ others safety, you need to consult with the Counselling Unit, Health Services and/or talk to family or next of kin.

Give them choice in the first instance.

Refer to the staff guidelines protocol.

# UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

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## Supporting Suicidal and/or Severely Distressed Students

### STAFF GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been created to help staff members deal with situations where students are severely distressed and/or express or are suspected to have, suicidal ideation or behaviour. It is important to emphasise that staff members are expected to support students exhibiting such ideation/ behaviour and subsequently refer them to counselling or therapeutic services. Rather these guidelines include step-by-step information on what to do in *urgent and/or emergency situations* that might arise, important steps to take and contact details which may be needed in such cases.

## 1. Introduction

Thinking and talking about suicide may be anxiety-provoking. It is hoped that by increasing knowledge and awareness regarding distress, as well as suicidal behaviour and ideation, these guidelines will make you feel more confident, rather than fearful, in discussing distress and suicide with students.

These guidelines inform university staff members about what actions and steps to take when students display or communicate troubling behaviour that is a cause for concern. Promoting a caring environment amongst university staff members and students by attending to mental health and emphasising the importance of psychological well-being, creates a campus climate where people feel that they can safely and openly discuss issues pertaining to anxiety, depression, distress and suicide, amongst other concerns. This fosters and reinforces an inclusive, healthy and proactive University setting.

According to Dumon and Portzky (2014), suicide is one of the leading causes of death for young people in Europe. For some students, especially young adults, University life can be stressful and challenging. The majority of University students are able to successfully complete their studies without experiencing major problems or issues. However, some students might find University life overwhelming and stressful. Personal issues might also affect their time on campus and psychological wellbeing. Academic pressures such as self-directed study, being part of a large cohort, working independently and meeting deadlines can also be stressors which some students are able to navigate more (or less) effectively than others.

Suicide intervention strategies and ways of handling distressed students in educational settings are therefore paramount, given that many young people spend a significant proportion of their time on campus or working on course-related projects, assignments and studying. Completed acts of suicide affect the student's family, loved ones, peers and staff members and this can have devastating consequences. If a student is in severe distress and/or at risk of killing themselves, this can impact the University as a whole on a number of levels. Completed acts of suicide may also lead to copycat behaviour amongst other vulnerable students, hence the importance and value of suicide prevention. Informing students where and how they can access professional support in a caring and compassionate manner may serve to instil hope and comfort in times of distress.

## 2. Who should read these guidelines?

All University staff members, in particular, staff members who have regular contact with students, such as administrators, lecturers, research supervisors (including external supervisors), practice educators or supervisors and laboratory staff should read these guidelines. It is highly recommended that you take the time to read these guidelines carefully and keep them at hand in the rare but serious event that you may need to access them quickly.

Contact details for University and off-campus mental health services and organisations are included in this document and these can be shared with students who are severely distressed. It can be useful for students to know what free support services are available both on campus and off-campus. Some students might not be able to access the support they require for a number of reasons. They may be unaware that such support is available to them or might not know how to actually access support. Students in severe distress might not have the capacity to access support independently without direct assistance from others. Stigma surrounding mental health can make it difficult for people to disclose that they are struggling and need help. This in turn leads to them feeling worse as they fail to access and receive assistance.

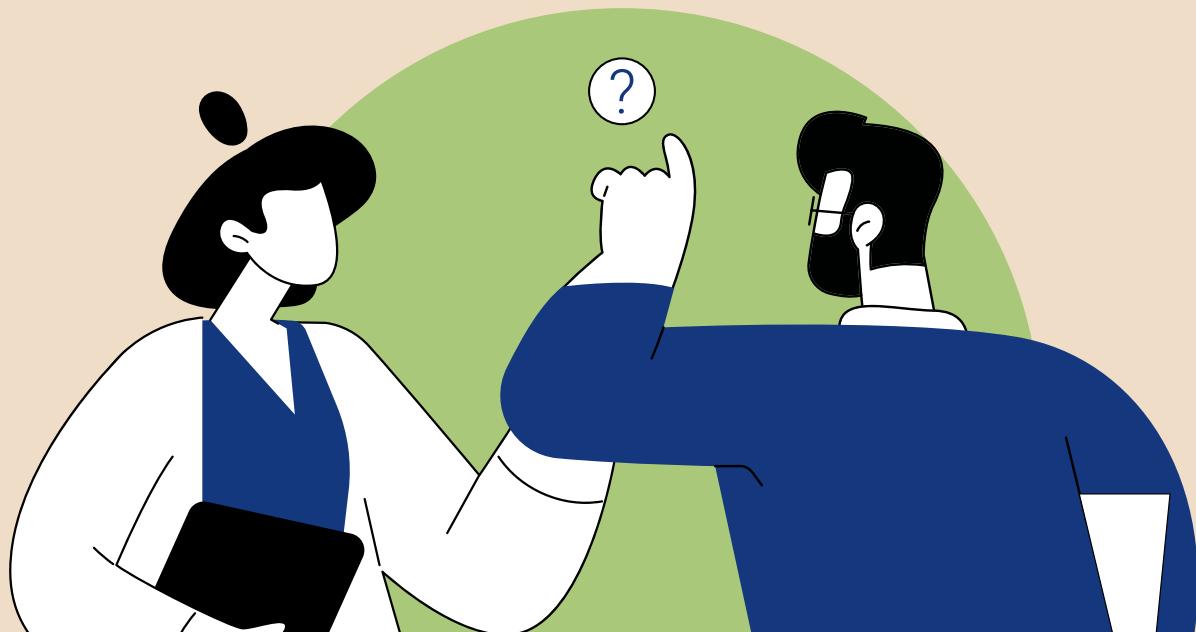
It is advisable that one responds in an appropriate manner when someone is in distress or one's life is potentially at risk. If a person discloses that they are feeling suicidal, this should not be perceived as attention-seeking behaviour and ignored. Rather, this should be recognised as a serious and genuine problem. We have an ethical duty not to ignore or overlook distressed students. It is hoped that these guidelines on how to respond in these situations will help to avoid the sense of uncertainty, fear and confusion that can arise in the rare event that a student informs you that they are thinking about or intend to kill or harm themselves. This is why it is important to familiarise yourself with the material included within this document and the professional mental health services available on campus that students can access for free.



### 3. Understanding suicide – common misconceptions

Suicide is often misunderstood; therefore, knowing about suicide and being better informed can help you feel more confident when talking about suicide with students. Here are some common misconceptions surrounding suicide:

- ▶ **'Suicide cannot be avoided and prevented'**
  - In most cases suicide can be prevented. This is because some individuals who are feeling suicidal might have complex and contrasting feelings regarding whether they actually want to end their life, as opposed to ending their suffering. Therefore, people might actually be in doubt as to whether they want to end their life or continue living.
- ▶ **'Suicide is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation'**
  - This is not the case. Many people experience moments of severe trauma, intense depression and personal difficulties but this does not necessarily make them want to end their life.
- ▶ **'Talking about suicide with a suicidal person increases the likelihood that they will kill themselves'**
  - For some people, talking about what they are going through with a person who is compassionate and understanding can be a great relief; talking about suicide in a safe setting and with a person of trust does not necessarily increase the likelihood that someone will kill themselves. Discussing what they are experiencing might also encourage distressed individuals to seek further help and support.
- ▶ **'People who talk about suicide will not complete or attempt suicide'**
  - The majority of people who killed themselves or attempted to kill themselves had spoken to someone before doing so. Therefore, disclosure of suicidal intention must be taken seriously at all times.



## 4. Who is at risk of suicide?

Suicide is a multifaceted phenomenon and often people decide to end their life for a number of reasons. Risk factors are elements that might make it more likely that someone will think about suicide, attempt suicide or end their own life. This does not mean that every person who shares these risk factors is suicidal and/or will kill themselves, but it does place them in a position of greater vulnerability than someone who does not share these risk factors. There are a range of risk factors that may make someone more vulnerable to killing themselves. Hence, some students are at higher risk of suicide or mental health problems than others. These can include:

- ▶ Students with a past history of suicide attempts;
- ▶ Students with a past, present or ongoing history of self-harm behaviour;
- ▶ Students who engage in drug and alcohol abuse (substance abusers are more likely to kill themselves);
- ▶ Students who have been diagnosed with a serious mental health condition such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, depression, etc.;
- ▶ Students with untreated mental health problems;
- ▶ Students who have lost someone close to them as a result of suicide;
- ▶ Students who belong to minority groups, in particular LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex) students;
- ▶ Students with medical or chronic health conditions, especially conditions that cause significant physical pain;
- ▶ Students who have experienced negative and traumatic early life experiences, especially physical and sexual abuse;
- ▶ Students with certain personality traits, such as pessimism etc.;
- ▶ Students who are going through serious financial and economic concerns, such as debt etc.;
- ▶ Students who are socially isolated and who have few or no friends or close relationships with others;
- ▶ Students who feel intense hopelessness and helplessness;
- ▶ Students who have experienced bullying, prejudice or victimisation; and
- ▶ Students who are perfectionists and highly self-critical.

## 5. Indications of severe distress

Warning signs can be direct and indirect indications that a student is in distress or potentially suicidal. Again, these warning signs do not necessarily mean that a student will harm themselves, but these signs should be taken seriously at all times and not remain ignored. If a student is behaving in a way that is concerning or that seems different, then you need to attend to this. These warning signs can be directly verbalised to you by the student, you may have noted these signs yourself and the student might have communicated that they are distressed in writing (e.g. sending you an email; leaving a comment on an assignment or a note in your pigeon hole). Although many students might not be suicidal, they may still be experiencing severe challenges and life events. Other students may also share their concerns about a fellow student, especially if the student leaves disconcerting posts on social media that their peers can read. Indications of severe distress can include:

- ▶ Poor academic progress and decline in grades and quality of coursework;
- ▶ Social isolation;
- ▶ Reports of conduct and relationship issues with other members of staff and students;
- ▶ Increase in high-risk, reckless behaviour, especially if this is linked to a life-changing event such as job loss or death of a loved one;
- ▶ Significant changes in mood, oscillating moods and extreme mood states. These can include intense anxiety characterised by severe agitation and depression;
- ▶ Changes in sleeping and eating, especially problems related to falling asleep and insomnia;
- ▶ Intense and inappropriate displays of rage and anger and the expressed desire to hurt others;
- ▶ Use of substances to cope, such as drugs or alcohol;
- ▶ Other members of staff have expressed their concerns about the student; and
- ▶ Confused thoughts, jumbled speech and loss of contact with reality e.g. seeing or hearing things that are not actually there.

If you observe severe distress symptoms kindly support the student to seek professional help before the situation escalates – prevention is better than cure.

## 6. Indications of suicidal ideation can include:

- ▶ Talking or writing (e.g., via email, Facebook or any other social media platform) about their desire to die or their intention to end their life;
- ▶ Talking or writing about the desire to stop living, that life is worthless and they feel hopeless and cannot go on any more;
- ▶ Talking or writing about intense inner pain and suffering that they cannot move away from and feeling that things will never get better or improve; and
- ▶ Talking or writing about feeling like a burden and that others would be better off without them.



## 7.

# How to respond to severely distressed and potentially suicidal students

If you are worried about a student's wellbeing, it is important for you to talk to them about this and offer support. If possible, a second member of staff should be present. The student should be informed of this and that the meeting involves concerns regarding their wellbeing. The other member of staff can be the Head of Department, the course co-ordinator or any other trusted staff member. If you are a newly-employed member of staff you should discuss your concerns with a more experienced member of staff prior to meeting the student. Here are some suggestions you might wish to consider when planning a meeting with the student:

### **7.1. *If possible, it is preferable to meet the student early on in the day.***

This is important because if the student discloses or indicates that they are at risk during your meeting, then action needs to be taken immediately and this can take time. Plan an appropriate length of time to talk to the student. If a student approaches you at the end of a lecture as you are rushing off to a meeting or another lecture, try to schedule a meeting time at your earliest convenience, bearing in mind the seriousness of the situation. It is strongly advised to meet a student in the morning or early afternoon in case access to further support is required from emergency services at Mater Dei Hospital, given their functioning team window. Arrange to meet the student in a private setting where you can talk to them without being interrupted. Meet the student on campus. Public places such as the canteen or a cafeteria are not appropriate settings. Make sure that the conversation cannot be overheard, that other students or uninvited staff will not enter the room. If you share an office with another staff member, you might wish to book a room elsewhere on campus which ideally has access to a telephone in case you need to contact someone.

### **7.2. *Have contact numbers in hand, in case of need.***

These can include the numbers of the student's next of kin, and the Mater Dei emergency services and /or helplines. You can call the CSU for support on 23403988/23402235 and seek the advice of a counselling professional on how to follow these guidelines.

### **7.3. *The meeting should be structured in a way that the student feels supported and hence more open to divulge their issues and concerns.***

7.3.1 It is recommended that a meeting of this nature is NOT held via Zoom or any other platform. This is because you might encounter challenges in accessing direct support, in the rare event that a student discloses suicidal intent. However, if an online meeting is unavoidable, then the following is recommended:

7.3.3 Meet the student in the morning in case access to further support is required. Prior to commencing the meeting ask the student from where they are carrying out the meeting and ask for the address/location. Ask the student to switch on their camera and to keep it on. This is essential in case the student suddenly exits the meeting and needs to be traced if there are concerns regarding their wellbeing:

7.3.3 If possible, have the student's contact details e.g. Id Number, mobile number, address and next of kin information/person to contact in case of need. **The latter information can often be accessed by Faculty/Departmental administrators.**

If you are going through personal stress and difficulties, then it is advisable to refer the student to a trusted colleague.

## 8. Confidentiality

Although a student's right to privacy is important, in cases of emergency other people need to be informed regarding risk of harm to self and/or others. **If a person's life is in danger, protection is paramount and privacy is secondary. This means that you should not assure students that what they disclose to you in such instances will be kept confidential. If a person is at risk or in severe distress, action needs to be taken.** You can inform the student that you want to support them to the best of your abilities and respect their privacy. However, if you feel very concerned about their wellbeing then you would need to inform others in order for the student to receive appropriate and tailored help that you yourself are unable to provide. You can reassure the student that they will be treated with all the care, respect and dignity they deserve and that their wellbeing is paramount.



## 9. How to start the conversation

It helps to demonstrate to the student that you are genuinely concerned about their wellbeing. You can let the student know that you are worried and what has made you feel worried about them, for instance:

- ▶ *'I noticed recently that your grades are declining and you have missed tutorials. I was wondering if you were OK and if I could be of any help?'*
- ▶ *'I am worrying about you because you seem...'*
- ▶ *'I have not heard from you in some time and became concerned'*
- ▶ *'I've observed that you have been sitting alone in class and seem sad...'; or*
- ▶ *'Your friends have emailed me recently and said that they are worried about you...'*

The intention is to ask broad, general questions. Probe carefully and respectfully. Listen carefully to what the student has to say and do not minimise the student's distress. Monitor how the student responds to your probes, as excessive questioning might make a student feel like they are being interrogated and that their privacy is being invaded. If they withdraw and do not disclose voluntarily, then this might indicate that they are uncomfortable and that caution is needed on your part. Staff members are once again reminded that they are not mental health professionals and should therefore not attempt to provide counselling to students. They are also reminded to maintain appropriate staff-student boundaries.



## 10. Talking about suicide

It is not easy to talk openly about suicide or to ask persons if they intend to kill themselves. However, it is important to do so in order to fully assess a student's wellbeing. Explicit, specific questions can help you determine the student's intentions. Be clear and non-threatening. Here are some suggestions regarding questions that can be asked in order to assess suicidal intent. Try and remain focussed, using a calm, matter-of-fact tone of voice:

- ▶ *'I understand that you are really struggling right now and things feel hopeless. Have you been thinking about harming or killing yourself recently?';*
- ▶ *Have you been thinking about harming yourself over the last few days?'; or*
- ▶ *'Have you made any plans or preparations to end your life? If yes, what plans or preparations have you made?'*

When a student tells you that they are severely distressed or thinking about killing themselves, this suggests that the student trusts you and feels comfortable sharing this information with you. Talking to you and feeling safe enough to do so can make a difference to a student's wellbeing. The support you can provide a student and the impact it can have on a student's life should not be underestimated.

If a student tells you or indicates that they intend to kill themselves, your first instinct might be to panic and feel afraid. However, not rushing into action and taking things one step at a time will help you feel more in control and less overwhelmed. Students who are thinking about killing themselves and who feel suicidal are a heterogeneous group and therefore it is important to attend to the uniqueness and subjectivity of each student, being mindful of the student's personal context and circumstances. Here are some examples of how you can respond to the student:

- ▶ Acknowledge that you recognise that they are in severe distress and intense suffering;
- ▶ Show the student that you are genuinely worried about them and that you intend to support them to the best of your abilities;
- ▶ Give the student time to talk and avoid interrupting;
- ▶ **Do not tell the student why they should not kill themselves or try and discuss the reasons for and against suicide.** This is because giving students 'reasons to live' might be the reasons that are drawing them to ending their life. For example, telling a student that *'your father will be devastated if you kill yourself'* can be counterproductive if a poor parent-child relationship is contributing to a student's suicidal intent;

- ▶ Do not get into an argument regarding the sanctity or importance of human life;
- ▶ Do not make the student feel guilty about their suicidal thoughts (e.g. *'Think of how this would affect your parents!'* *'Imagine how your mother would feel!'*) as this might make the student feel even worse;
- ▶ Check whether the student has already started acting on their plan;
- ▶ If a student begins to cry, allow them to do so and let them know that there is no shame in crying if they feel embarrassed. Crying is natural and can help to release tension. Telling someone *'Don't cry, everything will be OK'* can be undermining;
- ▶ Do not respond with shock, anger or disgust;
- ▶ Do not minimise the student's distress e.g. by saying *'many students are in the same boat but they just get on with it'* or *'It's no big deal, you just need to get your act together'*;
- ▶ Ask the student what sources of support they have available to them and if they have accessed these recently; and
- ▶ Emphasise that help is available and talk to the student about how such support can be accessed.



## 11.

# Situations when a student is at immediate risk of harming self or others:

### 11.1 When a student tells you that they intend to kill themselves

Serious danger is when a person is very likely to kill themselves. The student might disclose a clear plan and might have access to lethal means. It is important to ask them about this. In the rare-but-serious event that a student informs you that they intend to take their own life, it is important to follow these steps:

1. Ideally do not leave the student alone and unsupervised; and
2. It is important to have access to a telephone line or mobile phone.

### 11.2 During normal working hours

- 11.2.1 Contact the CSU on 2340 3988 / 2340 2235 for support and advice, call the student contact and if the latter is not available call the emergency number 112 which gives access to Mater Dei hospital ambulance and police department. Inform them that you have a student who is severely distressed and at high risk, hence the situation requires immediate attention. It must be emphasised that dealing with such a situation is a team effort.
- 11.2.3 If the student refuses support or walks out of your meeting, you must call the police on 2294 3391 (Msida Police Station) or 112 (the emergency number) and notify the student's next of kin if you are very concerned about the student's safety.

### 11.3 In the rare event of a crisis occurring outside normal working hours, where a student is at risk of harm to self or others:

- 11.3.1 Ask if the student prefers to be accompanied by a next of kin; if this is not possible, call the emergency number 112, informing the operator that you have a student at risk, and ask for an ambulance;
- 11.3.2 Stay with the student to ensure they are safe until the ambulance arrives and follow the instructions provided by the ambulance staff; and
- 11.3.3 If the student is at risk of harm to self or others AND refuses to cooperate and walks out of your meeting, you must call the Msida Police Station on 2294 3391 informing them of the situation and notify the student's next of kin.

## 12. In general

- 12.1 The student's next of kin need to be informed if there is concern about the student's safety. They are informed by the member of staff involved or the Faculty/Institute/ Centre/School depending on time and availability. If the next of kin cannot be reached, the police department should be informed;
- 12.2 The respective Head of Department, Dean or Director and Registrar need to be informed about the incident and the related concerns;
- 12.3 If a student is severely agitated or aggressive, then you would need to contact the Msida Police Station on 2294 3391 or 112; and
- 12.4 If students have made you aware that another student is at risk of suicide, then you may need to inform the students to contact the next of kin of the suicidal student or to call the police. The CSU can offer support and advise to the reporting student.

## 13.

### If a student is severely distressed, but not actively suicidal

If a student is experiencing severe distress but is not intending to kill themselves, then the following are some recommendations on how you can help the student:

- ▶ Ask the student if they are under the care of a mental health practitioner (e.g. psychiatrist, counsellor, psychotherapist or psychologist).
- ▶ Encourage the student to immediately book an appointment with their mental health practitioner especially if their mood has declined and their distress has increased recently. You might also consider asking the student for their consent to allow you to contact their mental health practitioner, to let them know that the student is struggling and that you are concerned. This can be useful especially if the student has not been in contact with their mental health practitioner for some time;
- ▶ You might offer to contact the CSU on the student's behalf and with the student's consent and support the student to make an appointment at the CSU if the student would find this helpful;

- ▶ Ask if there is anyone the student can turn to for support and ask the student if they would like you to call that person on their behalf and with their consent; and
- ▶ Ask if it would be helpful for them to discuss study options with their Head of Department or Course Coordinator. This can include considering the possibility of suspension of studies or assignment extensions, especially in the case of mitigating circumstances, such as severe psychological distress. Students might fear that they will be suspended from the University and here reassurance to the effect that students will be supported to continue their studies to the best of their abilities can be helpful. It is useful to emphasise that taking a suspension of studies is not a sign of failure or weakness. Many students successfully complete their studies following a break. Taking a suspension of studies or asking for extensions, can provide some relief to students in distress and students who are under pressure or who are generally struggling to cope. Students may not know what options are available to them and hence they might find it useful to discuss different study pathways that are available. However, it is important to note that suspension of studies and coursework extensions are a prerogative of the competent University authorities and should not be considered as something which shall be automatically granted.

Be mindful that when students are severely distressed and agitated, they might struggle to retain information and therefore it can be useful to provide them with written information.

## 14. Record keeping

Following a meeting with a student who discloses suicidal intent or ideation, it is important to complete a Critical Incident Report Form (the Form). The Form should be handwritten and kept in a sealed envelope. The sealed envelope containing the completed Form needs to be delivered to the Registrar by hand in order for this to be stored securely in the student's file. It is important to remind members of staff that students have a right to access all their personal data. The Form can be found at the end of this document.

**15.**

## What to do if a severely distressed student refuses to seek help

If a student is severely distressed, but not actively suicidal, remind them that you are not a mental health professional and cannot provide counselling or therapy. However, you can offer to contact the CSU on their behalf, with their consent, and even accompany them if they feel uncomfortable going by themselves to make inquiries. If the student still refuses referral to CSU and you remain concerned about their wellbeing, provide them with the list of helplines inserted in these Guidelines. Staff can call CSU for advice on such matters, however, it is important that you do not disclose identifying information that compromises the student's right to privacy.



### **Additional Information:**

The Office for Human Resources Management & Development in collaboration with other directorates and offices, organises a variety of training courses, workshops and sessions. These include the S.A.F.E Programme on Wellbeing and Mental Health First Aid.

For further information, please refer to the following link:

◀ [um.edu.mt/about/careers/trainingdevelopment](http://um.edu.mt/about/careers/trainingdevelopment)

16.

## Useful Information regarding On-Campus Support Services:

### University of Malta Counselling Unit (CSU), Health and Wellness Centre

The CSU, at the Health and Wellness Centre is a multi-professional team consisting of social workers, psychologists, counsellors and psychotherapists. They use a variety of approaches to support University students and staff. Access to the CSU is by appointment, on weekdays, during office hours. New service users can self-refer by email, by telephone or in person. Following an Intake Session, an evaluation is made and an appropriate CSU Professional is assigned and the individual is offered an appointment. All CSU Professionals offering their service are trained and registered with a professional body. The CSU is **open Mondays to Fridays from 08:00 – 20:00 between 1 October and 15 June and from 07:30 – 13:30 between 16 June and 30 September**. While, in general the CSU assigns clients on a first come first served basis, it reserves the right to prioritise clients according to their urgency. Other Services offered by the CSU include:

- ▶ Psychiatric Services by Mental Health Malta;
- ▶ Addiction Services by Social Workers from Foundation for Social Welfare Services/SEDQA;
- ▶ Student Solidarity Fund assessment;
- ▶ Training for staff members in the handling of suicidal and severely distressed students in line with set guidelines;
- ▶ Training for students in relation to studying, stress and time-management skills; and
- ▶ Mindfulness training.

📍 Judge Paolo Debono Street,  
University of Malta,  
Msida MSD 2080

(Campus Map no. 42)

- 👉 [um.edu.mt/counselling](http://um.edu.mt/counselling)
- 📞 +356 2340 3988
- ✉️ [counselling@um.edu.mt](mailto:counselling@um.edu.mt)



## ACCESS – Disability Support Unit

The University is proud to welcome all persons who have access requirements because of an impairment/medical condition/specific learning difficulties. Persons with access requirements may be students who satisfy the University's entry requirements and wish to continue their education at tertiary level as well as members of staff who require support during their working time on campus thus ensuring an inclusive community. The University is intent on providing reasonable accommodation in order to enable students to choose and follow the course they would like to take up. The University facilitates students' and staff members' participation in all activities throughout the time they spend on campus.

In order to ensure that the University's commitment to creating an inclusive environment is implemented in practice, work related to access within University is mainly carried out by the ACCESS – Disability Support Committee (**ADSC**) and its administrative arm, the ACCESS – Disability Support Unit (**ADSU**).

The ADSU is the operational arm of the ADSC and it is also part of the University's Health and Wellness Centre. It is headed by an academic and the staff within fulfil various roles. They:

- ▶ provide support to students, staff members and visitors with a disability;
- ▶ process applications for course and examination access arrangements at the G.F. Abela Junior College (**JC**) and the University;
- ▶ process applications for examinations access arrangements for the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (**MATSEC**) Examinations;
- ▶ guide students at JC and the University regarding the various types of support they can obtain during their course of studies;
- ▶ liaise with academic, administrative and technical staff members about matters related to access issues;
- ▶ liaise with the relevant professionals and other stakeholders;
- ▶ form part of the working groups appointed by the ADSC, including those set to decide about the access arrangements to be given to each student on a case-by-case basis;
- ▶ coordinate the necessary resources for the implementation of the decisions made by the ADSC.

### The ADSU Coordinator

The ADSU coordinator can be contacted by email or phone or by calling in person at the:

- 📍 Room 109, [um.edu.mt/access](http://um.edu.mt/access)
- Old Humanities Building, [+356 2340 2557](tel:+35623402557)
- University of Malta, [adsu@um.edu.mt](mailto:adsu@um.edu.mt)
- Msida MSD 2080

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### Office of the Registrar

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the academic administration and welfare of all University students. The Office of the Registrar has dedicated staff members who are entrusted to support students who may encounter difficulties both of an academic as well as of a personal nature.

- 📍 Room 207, [um.edu.mt/registrar](http://um.edu.mt/registrar)
- Administration Building, [+356 2340 2385 / 2386](tel:+35623402385)
- University of Malta, [academicregistrar@um.edu.mt](mailto:academicregistrar@um.edu.mt)
- Msida MSD 2080

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### Help Hub Service – Office of the Registrar

The Help Hub brings together many of the key services offered at the University in one easily accessible place. Located within Student's House, right off the main Quadrangle, the Help Hub provides students with the necessary individual as well as focussed attention through a one-stop-shop service. Opening hours **Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 12:30 and 13:30 to 16:30** where you may get advice and information about student life on campus, including admissions, finance, accommodation, exchange programmes, examination access arrangements and more.

- [um.edu.mt/services/helphub](http://um.edu.mt/services/helphub)
- [+356 2340 6183](tel:+35623406183)
- [helphub@um.edu.mt](mailto:helphub@um.edu.mt)

## The Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy provides a warm welcome, spiritual support and pastoral care to staff and students of all faiths and none.

Individuals can drop-in at Chaplaincy for a tea or coffee, relax, unwind or study in its common rooms, meet new friends, talk to the chaplain or use the chapel for some quiet time. At any point, individuals may also use the space provided by the Jesuit community at Dar Manwel Magri, which is located just a few metres away from the University Chaplaincy.

Mass is celebrated in the Chapel every Monday – Friday at 07:20 and 12:30 during the academic year, and at 07:10 during the summer months; and on Saturday evening at 19:30 and on Sunday in English at 11:00 unless otherwise specified.

Individuals can also get involved in one of the events organised by Chaplaincy: from voluntary work to any activity in the areas of spirituality, community and service.

The Chaplaincy is open every weekday between 07:00 and 20:00, and between 07:00 and 13:30 during summer hours.

📍 Chaplaincy, Student Services, University Chapel, University of Malta, Msida MSD 2080	👉 <a href="http://um.edu.mt/chaplaincy">um.edu.mt/chaplaincy</a> 📞 +356 2340 2341 ✉️ <a href="mailto:chaplaincy@um.edu.mt">chaplaincy@um.edu.mt</a> 🌐 <a href="https://www.facebook.com/chaplaincy">/chaplaincy</a> 🌐 <a href="https://www.instagram.com/umchaplaincy">/umchaplaincy</a>
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## The Student Advisory Services

The Student Advisory Services (**SAS**) aims to provide prospective and current students of the University with career-related information and advice to help them make informed decisions about their career paths and courses of study within the local context. This is done through the provision of information and advisory services at the University and at JC while keeping in constant contact with various stakeholders. The SAS assists the Office of the Registrar when dealing with enquiries relating to courses of study and also offers its services to schools, particularly those at the post-secondary level to ensure that prospective students have updated information about entry to university.

📍 Rooms 106–107, Gateway Building, University of Malta, Msida MSD 2080	👉 <a href="http://um.edu.mt/sas">um.edu.mt/sas</a> 📞 +356 2340 2847 / 3096 ✉️ <a href="mailto:sas@um.edu.mt">sas@um.edu.mt</a>
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## University of Malta Security (Main Gate)

📞 +356 2340 2803 | **Security Emergency Number:** 📞 +356 2340 3831

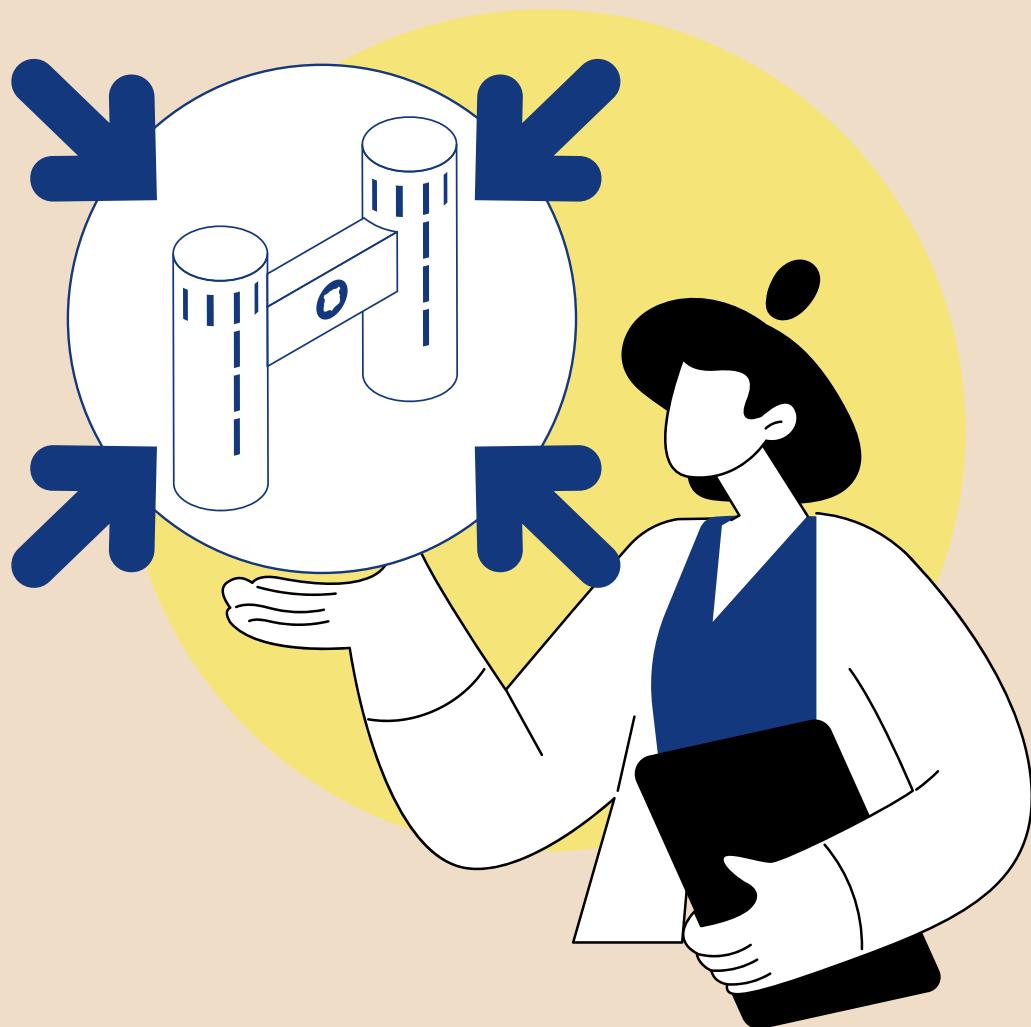
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### Health and Safety Services

The Health and Safety Service is responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring the University's health and safety programme according to established policy and legislative requirements. The Health and Safety team is also responsible for providing advice to all members of staff and students on all aspects of health and safety within the University's premises. The team members are also required to respond to emergency situations and investigate incidents and accidents on Campus; prepare reports and maintain appropriate documentation including those related to emergency preparedness.

👉 [um.edu.mt/safety](http://um.edu.mt/safety)

✉ [health-safety@um.edu.mt](mailto:health-safety@um.edu.mt)



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## Useful Information regarding Off-Campus Support Services:<sup>1</sup>

Mater Dei Accident and Emergency Department

The A&E Department is located at level -1 of Block D5, to the left of the hospital's main entrance. The Department is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The department caters for anyone seeking treatment for an **urgent** medical problem related to an illness or accident.

 +356 2545 4030

Emergency Services – Ambulance, Fire and Police

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## **Msida Police Station**

Msida Police Station, +356 2294 3391  
Trik D'Argens, cmru.police@gov.mt  
Msida MSD 1369

Kellimni.com

Kellimni.com is an online support service run by trained staff and volunteers reachable through e-mail, chat and smart messaging 24/7 for support.

Through *Kellimni.com*, youth can, in an anonymous way, express their concerns and talk about the issues directly affecting them. *Kellimni.com* is aimed at youths who are suffering from any form of social exclusion, abuse, neglect, and/or psychological difficulties and are in need of immediate emotional, moral and social support.

*Kellimni.com* is a local child and adolescent online support services being operated within the framework of Child Helpline International.

◀ [kellimni.com](http://kellimni.com)

<sup>1</sup> You may wish to access the website of the respective service for updated contact details.

## National Mental Health Helpline 24/7

This is offered by Mental Health Services and operates on a 24/7 basis.

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## Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) Head Office

By providing quality and timely service and support, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services empowers and helps to develop individuals to become responsible, integrated and productive members of society who value life as a resource for self-actualisation.

 212,  
Cannon Road,  
Santa Venera SVR 9034

 [fsws.gov.mt](http://fsws.gov.mt)

 +356 2258 8900

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## Aġenzija Sedqa

Aġenzija Sedqa aims to increase public awareness of the harm caused by addictive behaviours and imparts skills in order to prevent or to delay the development of such patterns. It also supports persons who have developed an addiction and their significant others to modify their lifestyles so as to lead a healthier and more satisfying life whilst becoming productive citizens within society. Aġenzija Sedqa seeks to do this whilst maintaining high ethical and professional standards in all its interventions with every individual who seeks its assistance.

 3,  
Braille Street,  
Santa Venera SVR 1690

 [fsws.gov.mt/en/sedqa](http://fsws.gov.mt/en/sedqa)

 +356 2388 5110

 [sedqa@gov.mt](mailto:sedqa@gov.mt)

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## Aġenzija Appoġġ

Aġenzija Appoġġ as the National Agency for children, families and the community, safeguards and promotes the well-being of these persons through the development and provision of psycho-social welfare services.

 36,  
St Luke's Road,  
Gwardamanga PTA 1318

 [fsws.gov.mt/en/appogg](http://fsws.gov.mt/en/appogg)

 +356 2295 9000

 [appogg@gov.mt](mailto:appogg@gov.mt)

## **Supportline 179**

Supportline 179 is the national helpline operated by Aġenzija Appoġġ, which offers support and information about local social welfare services and other agencies, and a referral service to callers who require assistance. It is also a national service for people who are in times of difficulty or crisis. The primary mission of the Supportline 179 service is to provide immediate and unbiased help to those seeking information, support, and/or require a referral to social service agencies.

The Supportline 179 is available on a 24/7 basis and all calls are free both from landlines and also from mobile phones. Supportline 179 receives calls on situations of child abuse, domestic violence, drug/alcohol/gambling problems, and homelessness, amongst others. Moreover, all the calls received on the EU Emotional Support Helpline 116 123 and EU Child Helpline 116 111, are dealt with by the Supportline 179 team.

- 👉 [fsws.gov.mt/en/appogg/Pages/supportline.aspx](http://fsws.gov.mt/en/appogg/Pages/supportline.aspx)
- 📞 +356 2388 5110
- ✉️ svetlana.camilleri@gov.mt

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## **Richmond Foundation**

The Foundation is a non-governmental and non-profit making organisation in terms of the laws of Malta. It is a leading local NGO in the provision of community services for persons with mental health difficulties and in the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness amongst the public. It strives to combat stigma and increase awareness on the subject through the local media. The Foundation actively participates in regional and international events where it has the opportunity to increase its knowledge, expand its network, shares its views and heightens its profile and reputation.

📍 Head Office, MCE House, Triq L-Industrija, Qormi QRM 3000	📍 Richmond Foundation, 424, St Joseph High Road, Santa Venera SVR 1013	👉 <a href="http://richmond.org.mt">richmond.org.mt</a> OLLI.chat (Mental Health Live Chat Service) 📞 +356 2122 4580   +356 2148 2336 / 0045 1770 (24/7 Mental Health Helpline) ✉️ <a href="mailto:info@richmond.org.mt">info@richmond.org.mt</a>
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## Caritas Malta

Caritas' mission is to alleviate poverty and promote human development and social justice, witnessing to the Christian faith and Gospel values. A number of Caritas-run services provide support to substance abusers entering rehabilitation programmes.

- 📍 Fondazzjoni Caritas Malta, Caritas Community Centre, Triq Mountbatten, Hamrun HMR 1577
- 👉 caritasmalta.org
- 📞 +356 2219 9000
- ✉️ info@caritasmalta.org

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## Legal Aid Malta

The mission of Legal Aid Malta is to ensure that the low-income persons are professionally and legally represented in a broad spectrum of litigations, defence and advocacy in a democratic society.

- 📍 188-189, Old Bakery Street, Valletta VLT 1455
- 👉 legalaidmalta.gov.mt
- 📞 +356 2247 1500
- ✉️ info.legalaidmalta@gov.mt

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## The Rainbow Support Service

In 2013, the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement MGRM set up a support service for LGBTIQ individuals, their family and friends. The service is committed to enhance the quality of life of LGBTIQ individuals, their family and friends through the provision of information, consultation and psycho-social welfare services.

The Rainbow Support Service aims to: provide an intake social work service whereby users can obtain information and support on LGBTIQ issues; provide one-to-one social work session and interventions, as well as group support sessions; promote the development of self-help within the LGBTIQ community, provide one-to-one therapeutic sessions to LGBTIQ individuals, provide training and consultation sessions to professionals on LGBTIQ affirmative practice and other LGBTIQ issues; assist in the promotion of positive public awareness and provide legal advice where required as well as training on LGBTIQ issues and the law.

- 📍 32, Parish Street, Mosta MST 2021
- 👉 maltagayrights.org/the-rainbow-support-service
- 📞 +356 2143 0009 | +356 9925 5559
- ✉️ mgrm@maltagayrights.org

### **The Women's Rights Foundation**

The Women's Rights Foundation (**WRF**) is a voluntary organisation committed to informing, educating and empowering women concerning their legal rights. WRF also provides free legal advice and initial legal representation to women who are survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and discriminated against due to their gender.

📍 203/1, wrf.org.mt  
Vincenti Buildings, +356 7970 8615  
Old Bakery Street, info@wrf.org.mt  
Valletta VLT 1455

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### **Law Clinic (UM)**

Dr Kurt Xerri  
✉ kurt.xerri@um.edu.mt



## Critical Incident Report Form<sup>2</sup>

### SECTION 1 – DETAILS OF THE STUDENT

Name and Surname	
Email Address	
Contact Number	
Current Residential Address	

### SECTION 2 – DETAILS OF THE PERSON FILING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name and Surname	
Designation	
University Email Address	
University Extension Number	

### SECTION 3 – CRITICAL INCIDENT DETAILS

Please fill in the date, time and place of incident:

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Please give a brief description of the incident (what happened, who was involved, other relevant information including the course of action taken.)

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Please give a brief description of who else has been informed about or is aware of the incident (including other University staff members, the University Counselling Services Unit, students, any Accident & Emergency personnel, family etc.)

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Please complete this form manually and seal in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL'. Kindly deliver by hand to the Registrar's Office

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Queen Mary University of London Pro-Forma for Recording Incidents, 'Disability and dyslexia service: Students in distress guide', p.29.

If you have any feedback on these guidelines or related experiences which you would like to share with the Counselling Services Unit at the Health and Wellness Centre, please write to us on [counselling@um.edu.mt](mailto:counselling@um.edu.mt).

## SOURCES ACCESSED

Preventing suicide in England: A cross-government outcome strategy to save lives. (2011).

Prepared by the Department of Health, United Kingdom

'Threatened, attempted or completed suicide protocol', Rhodes University. Retrieved from <https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Protocol%20for%20Suicide%20&%20attempted%20Suicide.pdf>

Suicide Prevention Resource Centre Virtual Learning Lab Crisis Protocols.

Retrieved from <http://www.sprc.org/crisis-protocols>

University of York (2016), Student mental ill-health task group: Report to the Vice-Chancellor.

Retrieved from <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/studenthomes/features/2016/Student%20Mental%20Ill-health%20Task%20Group%20Report%20Mar%202016.pdf>

Montana State University – Bozeman Mental Health Resources and Crisis Protocol.

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Dumon & Portzky (2014). TOOLKIT School-based suicide prevention, intervention and postvention, European regions enforcing actions against suicide. Retrieved from <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/537/6381/42179103528.pdf>

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Wei, M. (2007). *University policy and procedural responses to students at risk of suicide*. Student Scholarship Papers. Paper 35.

'Staff guidelines for helping international students in distress [internal use only]'. International Student Welfare Committee, University of Malta.

'Student guidelines for seeking assistance from the International Office'. International Student Welfare Committee, University of Malta.

