

LCUCK: Tips for Supporting Students with Mental Health Problems

Mental Health: Tips for Tutors

Every student has the opportunity to discuss his or her needs pre-entry, on enrolment, at induction and at any stage during their course. All students that disclose a mental health disability can then have access to Additional Learning Support.



Many students do not declare mental health needs at application or prior to entry because of the continuing problems over stigma and mental health in society. With respect to their right not to discuss personal experiences, offering the opportunity to do so should they wish is advisable. This can be facilitated with a simple question such as: “is everything going ok?” that allows the student confidence to disclose.

Reference to a mental health difficulty suggests a significant impairment to a person’s well-being as opposed to the fluctuations in mood that are commonly experienced.

Some of the Signs that can indicate Mental Distress are:

- Inability to Concentrate
- Panic attacks
- Absenteeism/lateness
- Lethargy/ extreme drowsiness/tiredness
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Mood Swings
- Self-neglect/ Decline in personal hygiene
- Acute Examination anxiety
- Confused thinking
- Significant changes in appearance (weight loss/ gain)
- Changes in production and/or quality of work (doing too much/ or not meeting deadlines)
- Marked difference in voice tone (sounds flat/ quiet or very loud/agitated)
- Self-harming (marks either apparent or may not be)
- Suicidal thoughts
- Obsessive behaviour
- Confused speaking
- Sleep loss
- Agitation
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of Interest

This list is not prescriptive or exhaustive. Individuals can present with different symptoms while suffering from the same condition. Diagnosed individuals can suffer from many of the above due to the combination and/or side effects of medication.

Needs assessment

If a disclosure is made at any stage, this is the time to assess whether the student has any needs that the college can meet. Often, all that is needed is some awareness of times of added stress and vulnerability for them (side effects or changes of medication; exam times etc.) and a degree of flexibility to enable students to achieve their potential or help them to manage barriers they may encounter in college. Talk to them about what they need to facilitate learning and how you can best help them to meet those needs. Do not assume that a disclosure means the student needs any special arrangements to be put in place. Students are quite likely to have an existing support system outside of college and not want this to impact on their college life.

Referrals for additional support

Where the student's needs are outside the remit of the tutor they should refer the student to the SEN office in room 104 where they can receive further advice in a discrete and non-discriminatory fashion.

