

TAIDE- YLIOPISTO^x

A teacher's guide for early intervention and expressing of concern

Instructions for teachers and other employees on expressing concern for a student's behaviour





The earlier the problem is addressed, the less damage it can do. Addressing difficult issues can be challenging and we often need support from others in the situation. There's no reason to ponder the matter on your own if you are not sure what to do. Remember that you can always consult your supervisor or the head of academic affairs, study psychologist or university chaplain.

If your concern is acute (threatening situation), call 112 and tell about the situation. Professionals will make an assessment on how to move forward. It's best to call for no reason than to jeopardise other people's health.

IN A NUTSHELL

1. Observe

2. Address the issue and listen

- a. **Talk about your genuine observations – do not make assumptions!**
 - i. *“I’ve noticed that you often seem absent-minded, why do you think that is?”*
 - ii. **It’s best not to make assumptions: “You might be depressed... you are a lazy student”**

3. Guide

- a. **If the matter is directly linked to your role as a teacher/employee, guide and help the student yourself.**
- b. **If the matter doesn't concern your job, guide the student elsewhere.**
 - i. *“ Many students find it helpful talking to a study psychologist if they're not making progress in their studies”.*
 - ii. *“A lot of people find FSHS services helpful in these kinds of situations”.*
 - iii. *“The university chaplain can help in many kinds of situations, for example if a student has apartment problems or financial woes.”*

Remember! It is the student's decision whether to accept the help or not. You have fulfilled your duty if you have addressed the issue.

If your concern is urgent (threatening behaviour), call the emergency number 112 and describe the situation.



Observing

- **Worrying behaviour** can refer to e.g. a student missing classes, trouble with making progress in studies, or not answering the teacher's messages. The student may have exceptionally severe stage fright and avoids social situations, eye contact, etc. The student does not talk at all and/or stays quiet in teaching situations. Other students may take notice to the student's conduct and appearance (the student's conduct/way of being can be described as "weird", for example), the student is passive. The student seems to be intoxicated on classes or smells of alcohol or cannabis. The student's outward appearance changes, the student seems to feel unwell often and appears absent-minded.
- **Disruptive behaviour** includes disturbing others, interrupting, talking over other people or making inappropriate comments on classes or group sessions. The student yells at the teacher, other students, sends inappropriate text messages or emails, or makes inappropriate comments on the university's social media channels. The student behaves in a discriminatory or inappropriate way. This can also mean nonverbal behaviour, such as laughing or eye-rolling during or after someone else's turn to speak.
- **Threatening behaviour** can refer to a situation where the student is threatening their own or someone else's safety during a teaching session or in a public space. Even social media is public space (department's Facebook pages etc.). Teachers may, understandably, find it threatening if a student doesn't answer the messages that they've sent. In this case, the situation isn't urgent or threatening, and the teacher doesn't have to do take any special measures, unless the student has previously expressed suicidal intent or other violent behaviour. If the teacher knows that the student has sent these kinds of messages in the past, it's advisable to take action the same way as in an urgent threat and call the emergency number. The Emergency Response Centre will assess the seriousness of the situation. The teacher's responsibility ends there.

Address the issue and guide towards help

- **Worrying behaviour:**
 - a. **Address the issue.** This shows the student that people care about them. Always have the conversations in private, one on one.
 - b. **Tell the student what's been worrying you.** Only talk about THINGS THAT YOU YOURSELF HAVE OBSERVED: what you have heard the student say or what you have seen them do. *"You have missed a lot of classes, I wonder what that's about and how you've been doing". "You smell of alcohol, what is that about? You look pale and you often seem absent-minded, is everything ok?"* But DO NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS on the



student's motives or situation. Making assumptions includes saying things like: *"You seem depressed ... your attitude towards studying is bad ... you are not motivated enough ... you've been angry at me ... you have a drinking problem ... you suffer from an eating disorder."*

- c. **Guide towards help if necessary:** *"Many students have found consulting a study psychologist helpful – would you like to contact a study psychologist or would you like us to do it together?". "The FSHS services are there for students – it might be a good idea to ask them for help in this situation. What do you think?"*
 - d. **Substance abuse** is its own separate issue, and it's important to intervene as early as possible. (Link to the intoxicant policy can be found at the end of this guide).
 - e. **Remember that your primary role is acting as the student's teacher.** It's best to always keep the roles clear: "as your teacher I can help you in this matter". Stepping outside of one's role may be confusing for the student (if a teacher starts acting like a parent, therapist etc.). We often underestimate the symbolic value of our professional status.
- **Disruptive behaviour**
 - a. **Teachers and students have the right to work in peace**
 - i. According to Section 45 of the Universities Act, a student who disrupts teaching, behaves violently or threateningly or endangers the life or health of another person may be ordered to leave the premises where teaching is being given or the event held by the university.
 - ii. Uniarts Helsinki has compiled guidelines on the prevention of inappropriate behaviour. (The link can be found at the end of this guide.)
 - iii. Always contact your supervisor on the matter. You can also consult a head of academic affairs, study psychologist, university chaplain, harassment contact person etc.
 - b. **If the student is disrupting the teaching, address the issue with the student, share your observations, and explain why you are asking the student to change their behaviour.** *"You are talking at the same time as I am: it is hard for me to concentrate on what I'm saying and it's disruptive for other students, too." "I noticed you rolling your eyes and laughing at the same time as when it was x's turn to talk. I found the behaviour very invalidating and unpleasant towards x. Could we start treating each other with more respect from now on?"*



- c. The student sends several messages on the phone and/or by email in the evenings or on the weekends. Address the situation with the student and ask what the messages are about/what the student's concern is. **Explain the rules of communications:** at what times you can answer messages and when you are available to students. If necessary, direct the student to contact the study psychologist or the FSHS services.
 - d. The student insults, bullies or behaves inappropriately in some other way either in messages or in a teaching situation (no serious acute threat). **Talk to the student directly and tell that you find the messages or the conduct inappropriate. Request the student to stop behaving inappropriately, because that kind of behaviour is strictly forbidden at Uniarts Helsinki.**
If the behaviour is repeated, you can tell the student that you will also contact your supervisor or the head of academic affairs etc. This will signal to the student that the situation is serious: "this will not end here".
- **Threatening behaviour**
 - a. **An urgent threatening situation is an exception in terms of early intervention. Then, it's usually necessary to take action and not merely have a conversation with the student.**
 - b. **Try to act calm and do not get provoked. Keep your hands in sight and do not make sudden movements. Call the emergency number 112 as soon as possible and describe the situation.** If possible, appease the threatening person by showing that you are there to listen and by speaking in a calm manner. **The most important thing is that you call for help.**
 - c. **Escape to the closest safe space if necessary** by giving an excuse if the threat is directed towards you and/or if the student won't calm down.
 - d. **Inform** the facilities services (facilities manager or attendant).
 - e. **Tell your supervisor** (and the head of academic affairs) **about your observations afterwards.**
 - f. **When the situation is over, seek support for yourself.** Most people find threatening situations traumatic. Talk to your colleagues and contact the occupational health care to receive support.

Involuntary treatment

It is often difficult for a non-professional to assess how serious the situation is and when it's necessary to get help immediately. **If there's a reason to suspect that a person is unable to take care of themselves because of their mental condition (acts in a strange way, psychotically) and/or poses a**



danger to themselves or to the safety of others, you must call the emergency number (112). The Emergency Response Centre will assess the situation and if necessary, send an ambulance to the person. A doctor will write an M1 referral, and the person will be admitted to a hospital if specific criteria are met (e.g. the person must be psychotic). If you know the student well, it's often advisable to address the issue with them before calling the emergency number (*"I'm really worried about your situation, I think it's wise to get help immediately"*.) In this case, it's advisable to find out if a friend or relative of the student can go to **psychiatric emergency care** (in Helsinki: Haartman Hospital or Malmi Hospital) with them.

Discussing sensitive information and confidentiality

All conversations and negotiations where a student's personal situation and problems are being discussed are confidential.

Information about a student's state of health, illness, treatment, attributes, living conditions or other personal matters is sensitive information, which cannot be processed, collected, used, passed on etc. without the person's permission or without a duty or obligation prescribed by law. If you, in your job, find out some information about a student's state of health, attributes, personal conditions or financial status, you cannot share the information with outsiders (Personal Data Act, Section 33). Healthcare personnel have a professional obligation to maintain secrecy regarding their clients' health and other information.

Further information

1. **Prevention of inappropriate behaviour:** https://artsi.uniarts.fi/documents/10184/976884/prevention_inappropriate_treatment_autum2015_edit20180306_jp.pdf/1d85296b-84cd-458d-8be3-50c4a53b1ea0
2. **Academies' rescue plans and safety instructions:** <https://artsi.uniarts.fi/en/facilities-management-facilities-and-security/security/rescue-plans>
3. **The intoxicant programme of Uniarts Helsinki's students:** <https://artsi.uniarts.fi/documents/10184/c5320b4c-8225-4c65-95e4-86d32dce91d5>
4. **Artsi pages on students' well-being:** <https://artsi.uniarts.fi/en/studying/students-social-and-financial-matters-and-well-being>
5. **Well-being model for students (who to consult)** <https://artsi.uniarts.fi/en/studying/students-social-and-financial-matters-and-well-being/well-being>
6. **Early support model for the staff** (instructions for the staff and supervisors on how to intervene when they encounter problems that jeopardise the well-being and work of employees): <https://artsi.uniarts.fi/en/for-the-staff/occupational-health-and-well-being/the-early-support-model>
7. **Uniarts Helsinki's code of ethics:** <https://artsi.uniarts.fi/en/code-of-ethics>