

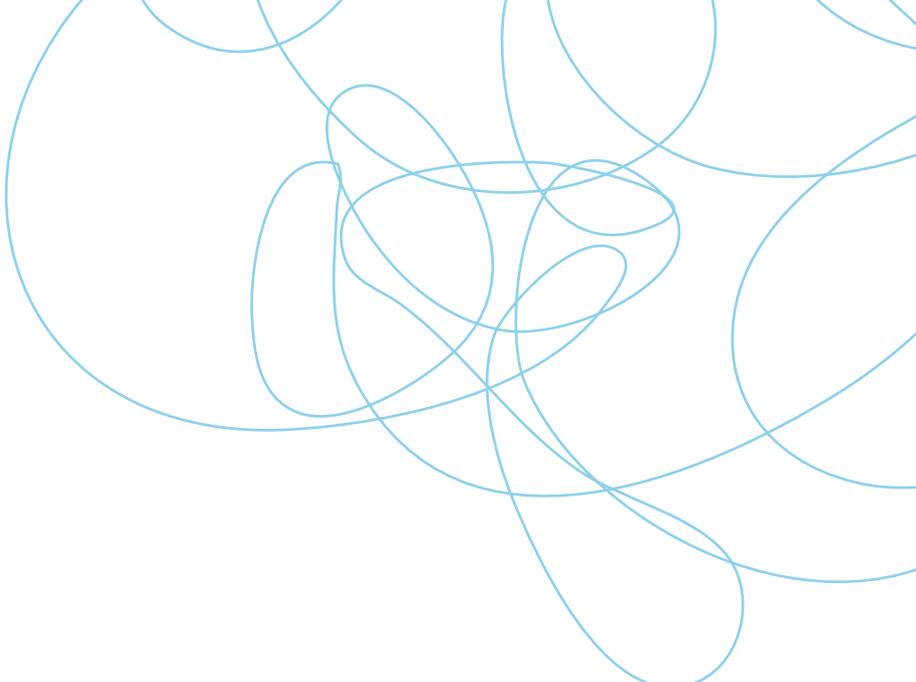


Capacity to Connect:
**SUPPORTING
STUDENTS IN
DISTRESS**

viu.ca/counselling

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OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

The Office of Student Affairs coordinates the University's response to critical incidents involving students, works with faculties and departments to gather information, supports the affected students and surrounding student community, and coordinates communication.

The Office of the Associate Vice-President of Student Affairs is a resource for instructors and administrators who need help with a student who is in very difficult circumstances and efforts to resolve their problems have not been successful.

Counselling Services, the VIU Health and Wellness Centre, International Student Services, Services for Aboriginal students, Disability Access Services, Office of Student Conduct Support, Health and Safety, Campus Security, RCMP, the Vancouver Island Crisis Response Team, and other resource groups work with the Student Affairs Office to ensure students receive the support they require.

Please contact the Office of the Associate Vice-President, Student Affairs **250.740.6594** if you have any questions regarding support for students.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Student life is a period of unique change filled with challenging events. As a member of the VIU community, you may identify and have the opportunity to support students who are struggling with issues that affect their ability to enjoy their time at VIU.

This booklet will help you recognize some signs and symptoms of students in distress. It provides tips on how to refer a student in distress for further assistance through Counselling Services or other appropriate resources.

ACADEMIC CONCERN

Examples include:

- Change in academic performance
- Failing
- Absenteeism
- Classroom management issues

CONNECT & INFORM

- Speak to the student directly
- Document details of concerns and any meetings and/or other communication
- Refer to the Student Academic Code of Conduct
- Share/report concerns with your Program Chair, Associate Dean, and/or Dean
- Submit a referral through EARLY ALERT viu.ca/early-alert

CHANGE IN MOOD OR BEHAVIOUR

Distressed in written or verbal expression, appearance and/or action.

CONNECT & INFORM

- Speak to the student directly and, if appropriate, inform him/her about the available resources.
- Document details of concerns and any meetings and/or other communication
- Refer to the Student Code of Conduct (if required)
- Share/report concerns with your Program Chair, Associate Dean, and/or Dean
- Submit a referral through EARLY ALERT viu.ca/early-alert

NANAIMO CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Counselling Services 250.740.6416

Sexual Misconduct Support Office 250.740.6416

Advising 250.740.6410

Office of Student Conduct Support
250.740.6594/6412

Services for Aboriginal Students 250.740.6510

International Student Services 250.740.6315

DISRUPTIVE AND/ OR DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR

Examples include:

- Yelling
- Inappropriate language
- Sending numerous emails or phone calls - some inappropriate content
- Refusing to follow directions

CONNECT & INFORM

- Speak to the student directly and, if appropriate, inform him/her about the available resources.
- Document details of concerns and any meetings and/or other communication
- Refer to the Student Code of Conduct and/or submit an Incident Report.
- Share/report concerns with your Program Chair, Associate Dean, and/or Dean
- Refer to the Office of Student Conduct Support

ERRATIC AND/OR ACUTE EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Examples include:

- Aggressive words or actions
- Damage to property
- Persistent unwanted contact by phone, email, social media or in-person

CONNECT & INFORM

- Speak to the student directly and, if appropriate, inform him/her about the available resources.
- Document details of concerns and any meetings and/or other communication
- Submit an Incident Report
- Refer to the Office of Student Affairs (Conduct) or Health and Wellness (Director, Student Affairs)
- Report concerns to Program Chair, Associate Dean, and/or Dean

THREAT OF DANGER TO SELF AND/OR OTHERS

Immediate threat of danger to self and/or others

CONNECT & INFORM

First - get help immediately – call **911**

Then - call campus security **250.740.6600** or local **6600**

Finally – contact the Risk and Threat Assessment Team (RTAT) **250.740.6594/6412**

Island Crisis Society
1.888.494.3888

VIU Health and Wellness Centre
250.740.6620

Director, Student Affairs
250.740.6406/6416

Director, International Student Services 250.740.6384

Health and Safety 250.740.6283
Security 250.740.6600

Island Crisis Society 1.888.494.3888
Risk and Threat Assessment Team (RTAT) 250.740.6594/6412

Cowichan Campus / Powell River Campus resources, please see pages 12/13

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF DISTRESS

A common indicator of distress is change – behaving or reacting in ways that are not typical for an individual.



ACADEMIC SIGNS

- Significant decline in the quality or quantity of classroom /research work
- Change in attendance
- Repeated lateness, missed appointments or deadlines
- Missed assignments or exams
- Repeated requests for extensions or deferrals
- Repeated help seeking or requests for reassurance
- Difficulty listening, processing information or problem-solving
- Working hard but struggling to meet demands



EMOTIONAL SIGNS

- Exaggerated emotional response (e.g., intense anger, sobbing, persistent worry)
- Overly confident and enthusiastic
- Absence of emotion – appearing flat, disengaged
- Lack of motivation or interest
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Talking about giving up or not caring anymore
- Talking or writing about hopelessness, death, or suicide
- Mistrust or sense of being persecuted
- Persistent blame, lack of ownership



PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Falling asleep in class
- Noticeable decline in hygiene or looking unkempt
- Significant weight change
- Significant change in energy level
- Appearing drunk or high
- Visible bruises, cuts or injuries



BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

- Describing difficult circumstances or experiences (e.g., loss, conflict, trauma, assault)
- Ranting emails
- Excessive time spent on the Internet or engaged in fantasy games
- Expressing contempt toward others or a wish to seek revenge
- Disregard of rules or authority
- Peer reports of concerns about, or discomfort with a student
- Actions or gestures that threaten or intimidate



SPECIFIC WARNING SIGNS FOR SUICIDE

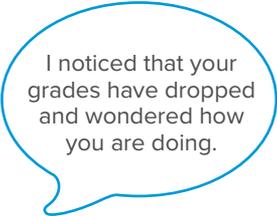
These warning signs have come out of research from the American Association of Suicidology and are now used and accepted worldwide. They create the acronym IS PATH WARM and provide a tool for caregivers to that is we notice or are aware of any of the following Warning Signs we want to have the possibility of suicide on our radar.

- **Ideation** – threatened or communicated thoughts of suicide
- **Substance Misuse** – excessive or increased use of alcohol or drugs
- **Purposeless** – life lacks purpose – “what’s the point?”
- **Anxiety** – worry, dread, feeling out of control
- **Trapped** – “I can’t see any way out of this”
- **Hopelessness** – “Nothing is ever going to get better”
- **Withdrawal** – pulls away from friends and activities
- **Anger** – rage, unpredictable outbursts
- **Recklessness** – takes chances with health and safety
- **Mood** – changes in feelings or appearance

HOW TO RESPOND TO A DISTRESSED STUDENT

APPROACH

- It's OK to ask and express concern.
 - Be specific about the behavior that concerns you.
 - Be aware of cultural and/or gender norms.
- “I noticed you were tearful in class today.”
- “I noticed that your grades have dropped.”
- “Is everything OK?”



I noticed that your grades have dropped and wondered how you are doing.

LISTEN

- Listen in non-judgmental fashion.
 - Be patient and give your undivided attention.
 - Be clear about your concerns and how you can/cannot help.
- “Is there something I can do to help you?”



Is there something I can do to help you?

SUPPORT

- Acknowledge the student's thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way.
 - Offer support and reassurance that you want to help.
- “It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed.”
- “What you're feeling is normal...other students are having similar experiences.”



It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed.

REFER

Provide students information on on campus services:

- Counselling Services
- Student Health Clinic
- International Student Services
- Services for Aboriginal students
- Disability Services
- VIU Safety App
- Health and Safety
- Campus Security
- Safe Walk program
- Sexual Misconduct Support Centres
- Human Rights and Respectful Workplace Office

If possible, walk the student to the support services if you have a serious concern.

“Would you like me to help you connect with resources on campus?”

“Would you like to call together and book an appointment?”

“Seeking help through counselling is confidential.”

“Would you like me to walk with you to the support services?”



Seeking help through Counselling is confidential.

WHAT IF THE STUDENT WON'T SEEK HELP?

Accessing services is voluntary, unless the situation is urgent and the student is not safe on their own.

ASSESS FOR DANGER

Is anyone at risk of immediate harm? If yes, share your concerns with:

911; then **Campus Security** 250.740.6600 or local 6600; finally, **Director, Student Affairs** 250.740.6406/6416; **Office of Student Conduct Support** 250.740.6594; **Director, International Student Services** 250.740.6384; **Vancouver Island Crisis Society** 1.888.4894.3888; **Risk and Threat Assessment Team** 250.740.6406/6594.

DUTY TO INFORM

The directive to report imminent suicide risk is a priority over any student or individual privacy concerns. This follows a guideline set by the Privacy Commissioners of BC and Ontario which is commonly referred by the adage: “Safety trumps privacy...every time.” Failure or delay in doing this could increase the risk to the student’s life and also present a liability risk to the University.

If there is no risk of harm, ultimately it is the individual’s right to choose whether to seek help. Individuals are resilient and often come to their own solutions.

EARLY ALERT

Early Alert is a VIU student success and retention tool for faculty to identify and refer students in difficulty who may benefit from additional support outside the class/program.

Faculty are encouraged to use Early Alert when concerned about a student's well-being or academic performance.

Early Alert is **NOT** to be used when a student is in immediate crisis or where concerns about student health and safety are present. In such cases call 250-740-6600 or call 911.

Faculty are encouraged to submit an Early Alert as early as possible in the semester so that support can be maximized, but Alerts submitted later in the semester are welcome.

**Instructors of the English Language Centre (ELC), Faculty of International Education, should refer Early Alert student concerns to the ELC Program Chair.*

HOW DO I USE EARLY ALERT?

FIRST, TALK WITH YOUR STUDENT.

Often issues can be clarified or resolved and referrals made during this conversation.

STILL CONCERNED?

If you still have concerns, let the student know that you are submitting an Early Alert and explain what that means (see page 9).

USE THE COURSE GRADEBOOK TO SUBMIT AN EARLY ALERT.

Be sure to complete the form with enough information to make clear what the issue is and what kind of support you are seeking for the student. This helps the EA team match the service area appropriately.



You will receive an automatic email to let you know that the Early Alert has been received.

An email is also sent to the student, indicating that an Early Alert has been submitted



For privacy reasons no additional follow up information may be shared with you regarding the outcome of the Early Alert. Also, students are free to engage with the support offered...or not.

HOW CAN I LET MY STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT EARLY ALERT?

Mention it as part of your overview as you begin a new course in each semester with a new class. The more you normalize EA and student support services, the more uptake from your students. Please include a statement in your course syllabus, website or statement of expectations. You are welcome to use the example below:

'VIU faculty participate in an Early Alert system to connect students experiencing difficulty with resources that may be helpful to their success. If during the semester I become concerned about your progress in this course, and after we have spoken regarding my concerns, I may use EA to put you in touch with resources that I feel would support your personal wellness and success in this class. These may include academic advising, financial aid, the writing centre, counselling or other resources. This information is treated confidentially and is sent because I am concerned about you and your academic success.'

QUESTIONS?

Email earlyalert@viu.ca

LIMITS AND CONSULTATION

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

You will be able to assist many distressed students on your own by simply listening and referring them for further help. Some students will, however, need much more than you can offer.

Below are some signs to look for that may suggest the assistance of a professional is warranted:

- You feel overly responsible for the student.
- You feel the problems the student brings are more than you can handle.
- You feel stressed out by the student's issues or behaviour.
- You see a pattern repeating itself in your interactions with a student.
- You find yourself avoiding the student.
- You feel anxious or angry when the student approaches you.

BOUNDARIES AND BALANCE

Your ability to respond to students who need help will be influenced by your personal style and the role you play in the VIU community. When helping students, it is important to remember to maintain your own boundaries. Recognize what you can and can't do given the limitations of your role. Refer students as appropriate and access your own support when needed.

CONSULTATION

Staff of the various Student Services on campus can meet with staff and faculty who are concerned about a student and are unsure how to handle the situation. You are encouraged to consult when:

- You are concerned about a student's well-being or academic performance
- but unsure how or whether to intervene.
- You are uncertain how to respond to a student's approach for help.
- You continue to be concerned about a student who has declined help.



TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS and respond if a student situation leaves you feeling worried, alarmed, or threatened. If you are unsure, please consult.

Once the student is supported, ensure that you are supported, while maintaining the confidentiality of the student. Talk to friends, family, Elders, colleagues or connect with your Employee Family Assistance program:

Homewood Health, 1.800.663.1142
TTY 1.888.384.1152 homewoodhealth.com

RESOURCES

NANAIMO CAMPUS

250.753.3245

900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5S5

Counselling 250.740.6416

Sexual Misconduct Support Office
250.740.6416

VIU Health and Wellness Centre
250.740.6620

Health and Safety 250.740.6283

Advising 250.740.6410

Disability Access Services
250.740.6446

VIU Emergency Services
6600/250.740.6600

**Associate Vice-President,
Student Affairs**
250.740.6570/250.740.6594

Director, Student Affairs
250.740.6406/250.740.6416

Aboriginal Elders in Residence
250.753.3245, local 2096

Elders in Residence support Aboriginal students and act as liaisons with First Nations communities. They are also available to faculty, staff and students in aboriginal culture or seeking guidance. All student are welcome to consult the Elders in Residence for support and guidance.

VIU Saftey App

Available on iTunes and the Playstore

**Guide to Resources
in your community**

GO HERE

For more information on community resources, look for this box at viu/counselling.ca

OFF CAMPUS RESOURCES - NANAIMO

Mental Health Walk-In Crisis Counselling Clinic

250.739.5710

Fax: 250.755.3310

203-2000 Island Highway North,
(Brooks Landing), Nanaimo, BC
V9S 5W3

Hours: 10 am to 6:15 pm,
Monday to Friday

Services are free of charge and
available to any person who has a
major mental illness, an addiction or
is in acute emotional distress.

Vancouver Island Crisis Line

1.888.494.3888

24 hours – 7 days a week

Short-term emotional support

Crisis Chat

vicrisis.ca

7 nights/week 6 pm – 10 pm

Crisis Text

250.800.3806

7 nights/week 6 pm – 10 pm

Suicide prevention

1.800.SUICIDE (784.2433) or 911

Haven Society

Haven Transition house provides
temporary shelter and support for
women and children who have
experienced violence and are seeking
safety while exploring their options.

24-hour Crisis line toll free

1.888.756.0616

havensociety.com

COWICHAN CAMPUS

250.746.3500

2011 University Way,
Duncan, BC V9L 0C7

Student Affairs 250.746.3509

- Counselling & Advising services;
Disability Access Services,
and Sexual Misconduct Support
Office.
- Services for Aboriginal Services:
Counselling, Advising,
and Elders-in-Residence.

Emergency, Security, & First Aid Services 250.740.6600

Vancouver Island Crisis Line (24 Hrs)

1.888.494.3888 or 1.800.Suicide

WALK-IN MEDICAL CLINICS & HOSPITAL

Beverly Medical Clinic

(Walk-ins welcome)

250.597.3390

201-2763 Beverly Street, Duncan

Mon-Fri 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM;

Sat-Sun 10:00 AM – 1 PM

Primacy-Cowichan Way

Walk-in Medical Clinic 778.422.3999

291 Cowichan Way, Duncan

Mon-Thurs 9:00 AM – 8 PM;

Fri 9:00 AM; Sat 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Cowichan District Hospital

250.737.2030

3045 Gibbons Rd, Duncan

Margaret Moss Health Centre

250.709.3050

Pregnancy, Child, Youth, and Family
related services; Options for Sexual
Health.

675 Canada Avenue, Duncan

Mon-Fri 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Ts'ewulhntun Health Clinic

Medical, Dental, Immunizations,
Youth Centre, & Elders support.

Cowichan Tribes

250.746.6184

5768 Allenby Road, Duncan

Mon-Fri 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

MENTAL HEALTH

Duncan Mental Health & Addiction Services

250.709.3090

3088 Gibbons Rd. Duncan
Self-referral or Doctor-referral;
Mon – Fri 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Crisis Response

1.888.494.3888 (VI Crisis line)

7 Days a week 8:30-7:00 PM

Kwun'atsustul Counselling Services

778.422.3122

200 Cowichan Way, Duncan
Mon-Fri 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM;
Drop-ins welcome.

Ts'eWulhtun Health Centre, Medical Clinic

250.746.6184
5768 Allenby Rd, Duncan, BC V9L 5J1
8:30AM–4:30PM

[cowichantribes.com/
member-services/health/](http://cowichantribes.com/member-services/health/)

ABORIGINAL RESOURCES

Hiiye'yu Lelum Society

(House of Friendship)

250.748.2242

#106 – 5462 Trans Canada Hwy

WOMEN'S RESOURCES/ SAFE HOUSE

Cowichan Women

Against Violence Society

250.748.8544

#103-255 Ingram Street, Duncan BC

Somenos Women's Transition House

250.748.8544

Warmland Women's Support Services Society

250.710.8177

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Warmland House Emergency Shelter

2579 Lewis Street, Duncan

Community Resource database
vicicrisis.ca/existing/

community-resource-database

POWELL RIVER CAMPUS

604.485.2878

100 – 7085 Nootka St.
Powell River, B.C. V8A 3C6

Student Affairs 604.485.2878

- Counselling & Advising services;
Disability Access Services,
and Sexual Misconduct Support
Office.
- services for aboriginal students:
counselling, advising,
and elders-in-residence

Powell River Crisis Line (24 hours)

1.866.661.3311 or 1 800 Suicide

Medical Clinic Associates

604.485.6261

4794 Joyce Avenue

Powell River General Hospital

604.485.3211 (hospital reception)
5000 Joyce Avenue

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health & Addictions

604.485.3300

Powell River General Hospital, 3rd
Floor 5000 Joyce Ave.

WOMEN'S RESOURCES/ SAFE HOUSE

Transition/Grace House

604.485.4554

Outreach Program 604.485.6980

RCMP Victim Services 604.485.3418



VIU

viu.ca/counselling