

Supporting students in distress – a guide for ANU staff

For life threatening emergencies, call **000**
(**0-000** if calling from an ANU desk phone).

If on campus also call ANU UniSafe on
(02) 6125 2249 (24 hours/7 days a week).



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ANU is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for staff and students. We acknowledge the important role that academic and professional staff play in supporting students who may be experiencing wellbeing or personal concerns.

This resource has been developed by the Student Safety and Wellbeing team to provide staff with general information on how to provide initial support to students who disclose distress or for staff who have concerns about a student's safety and wellbeing. We acknowledge that modification to responses may be required based on the individual student's needs and circumstances.

The Guide also outlines referral pathways to support services both at ANU and in the community and provides information on when and how to escalate incidents to ensure the appropriate support and response can be put in place.

The University offers services such as the Student Safety and Wellbeing team and ANU Counselling who are available to provide advice and support to staff who may be supporting students in distress. Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Managers offer walk-in appointments Monday to Friday during business hours (9am – 4pm). After hours, students can be supported by the ANU Wellbeing and Support Line which is available 24 hours/7 days a week by calling **1300 050 327** or texting **0488 884 170**.



For life threatening situations, call **000**
(**0-000** if calling from an ANU desk phone).

If on campus, please also call ANU UniSafe on **(02) 6125 2249**
(24 hours/7 days per week).

Please also refer to the Student Critical Incident Policy
for guidance on responding to student critical incidents
at policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_002606

Information on community services is available at [anu.edu.au/students/
health-safety-wellbeing/getting-help-at-anu/urgent-support](https://anu.edu.au/students/health-safety-wellbeing/getting-help-at-anu/urgent-support)

If you are unsure what support a student may need, you can always
refer a student to a Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Manager
by phone **6125 2211** or email student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au who
can support them to clarify their needs and organise referrals
to support on campus and in the community.



Key Community Contacts:

ACT Access Mental Health (24/7): 1800 629 354

Lifeline (24/7): 13 11 24

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

1800RESPECT - National domestic, family and sexual violence (24/7):
1800 737 732

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre: (02) 6247 2525

Domestic Violence Crisis Service: (02) 6280 0900

Police Assistance Line (no immediate danger): 131 444

(Contact details for key ANU services and Student Residences
on Acton campus are available on the ANU contact details tab)



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Managing Your Own Wellbeing

It can be difficult hearing and supporting someone who has experienced distress including sexual assault or harassment or is experiencing mental health or wellbeing difficulties.

It is important to remember that as an academic or professional staff, your role is to respond with compassion, provide students with information and support students to access the appropriate services to assist with their safety and wellbeing. Unless it is within your position description, you are not expected to provide mental health counselling or undertake responsibility for resolving the student's crisis or distress.

To support your personal health and wellbeing, you must first understand your role and its boundaries. On occasion, students will reach out to staff members as their main source of support for wellbeing and mental health however, it is important that you are clear with the limits to your role. This may include understanding services that are available to students so that you can facilitate appropriate referrals and being clear with students about what you can and cannot support them with.

It is important to look after yourself, particularly when supporting someone who is in distress. The University offers a number of free and confidential services you can access if you need to debrief or just have a chat about your own wellbeing.

You are encouraged to contact the available support services overleaf.

Managing Your Own Wellbeing

Employee Assistance Programs

ANU offers a choice of counselling and advisory services for our staff members and their immediate families. Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providers can help you work through a broad range of personal and work-related issues. You don't need to struggle alone. They're qualified, experienced and independent and the service is free and confidential.

Assure:

1800 808 374 or assureprograms.com.au

Assure has a 24/7 crisis line available

Relationships Australia:

02 6122 7100 or relationships.org.au

ANU Adviser to staff

The Adviser to Staff provides free, confidential and professional counselling and advice to staff on campus in dealing with work-related or personal issues that may be affecting their work.

The Adviser can also help develop strategies for dealing with workplace issues causing difficulties or tension, and provide an informal, work-related mediation service for dispute resolution or problem solving.

Email staff.adviser@anu.edu.au

All services are free and confidential. For further information visit:
services.anu.edu.au/human-resources/wellbeing

Death of a Student

A death of a student, whether it happens on campus or off campus, falls under the University's Student Critical Incident policy and procedure.

If a student dies on campus

Please contact emergency services on 000 followed by ANU UniSafe on (02) 6125 2249.

ANU UniSafe will provide initial support and escalate to the Incident Coordinator under the Student Critical Incident Policy.

If a student dies off campus

If you become aware of a student death, off campus, which could be through information shared by another student, please contact ANU UniSafe and provide the student's name, student number and any other information you have about the situation. ANU UniSafe will escalate the report to the Incident Coordinator under the Student Critical Incident Policy.

Please note: staff must comply with the University's Privacy Policy (policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007) and are not permitted to provide student's personal information to third parties (including family and friends) without that person's consent. Any communication with third parties, if required, will be managed in accordance with the Student Critical Incident Policy.

Missing Student

A missing student falls under the University's Student Critical Incident policy and procedure policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_002606.

If you become aware of a missing student, after undertaking due diligence to ascertain their status (please see page on disengaged student), you should contact ANU UniSafe on [6125 2249](tel:61252249). ANU UniSafe will determine if the matter should be escalated to the Duty Officer under the Student Critical Incident Policy.

When contacting ANU UniSafe, please provide the student's name, student number and any other information you have about the situation.

Please note: staff must comply with the University's Privacy Policy (policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007) and are not permitted to provide student's personal information to third parties (including family and friends) without that person's consent. Any communication with third parties, if required, will be managed in accordance with the Student Critical Incident Policy.

Students who are suspected missing while travelling domestically or internationally:

For students who are travelling on University business (i.e. research, fieldwork, exchange or study abroad) and can't be contacted, visit services.anu.edu.au/human-resources/business-travel/international-sos-travel-risk-management-provider-for-the-anu

International SOS is the University's travel risk management provider and should be contacted.

ANU Membership number: [12AGDA915147](https://www.anu.edu.au/membership)

International SOS Assistance Centre number: [+61 2 9372 2468](tel:+61293722468)

Disengaged Student

You may become concerned about a student that has disengaged from their studies or who has failed to communicate with you.

Step 1: Establish if the student is missing

Make contact with the student through communication channels available to you (such as email or phone) or through the College Student Administration Manager to let them know you are concerned about them and want to check on their wellbeing.

- Call the student using the number listed on the student system
- Email them at both their ANU and personal email (if available)
- Check engagement with Wattle, classes, with supervisors or other academic engagement
- If the student lives on campus, check with their Residential Management if they have seen/had contact from the student
- Check that the student has not applied for leave of absence or cancelled their enrolment.

The College Student Administration Managers (or equivalent) are able to access the Student Administration System and WATTLE to ascertain the student's status if required.

If the student doesn't reply to your first communication attempts, email them to let them know you will be escalating your concern to the Student Safety and Wellbeing team.

Please note that at this stage it is not recommended to contact the student's emergency contact as provided in the student system. This step will take place if the matter is escalated as a missing student and managed in line with the ANU Student Critical Incident Policy.

Disengaged Student

Step 2: Escalate to Student Safety and Wellbeing

If you still don't have any communication from the student in 24 hours, escalate to the Student Safety and Wellbeing by emailing student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au and providing the following:

- Name of student
- Last date of contact
- Contact attempts – dates and means
- Any information that concerns you about the student's wellbeing

The Student Safety and Wellbeing team will attempt to make contact and if needed can initiate a request for a welfare check with the Police and/or ANU UniSafe if the student is living in on campus residence.

The Student Safety and Wellbeing team will also assess the situation and liaise with ANU UniSafe if contact is not established for further escalation as a missing student under the Student Critical Incident Policy.

For staff and students who are suspected missing while travelling domestically or internationally on University business, International SOS is the University's travel risk management provider and should be contacted.

Bullying, Discrimination or Harassment Disclosure

Bullying and harassment is repeated, unreasonable and unwelcome behaviour directed towards a person or group that humiliates, offends or intimidates a person or group.

Discrimination occurs when a person, or group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics including their age, gender identity, disability, race, religion, sex, or sexuality.

If a student discloses they have been impacted by bullying, discrimination or harassment you should:

Step 1: Attend to immediate safety needs

Determine if there are any immediate safety or wellbeing concerns for the person who is making the disclosure. For time critical support, call emergency services at **000**. If the student is on campus, please also contact ANU UniSafe on **(02) 6125 2249**.

Step 2: Listen, believe, be supportive and explain your role

Find a quiet space to talk and give the person your full attention. Let them tell you at their own pace, without interrupting or asking direct or probing questions about the experience.

Validate their experience by acknowledging their distress. Be upfront about your role and limits to your role. It is ok to say you need assistance from someone to ensure you can provide the best support and information.

Step 3: Refer to support

There are a number of services on campus that can provide support and information to students who have experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment.

These include the following on the next page.

Bullying, Discrimination or Harassment Disclosure

Dean of students

Provides information on policies and resolution processes as well as connection with other support services and liaison with academics as needed.

Contact: 6125 4184 or dean.students@anu.edu.au

Student safety and wellbeing

Provides information and coordinates support and initial assessment of needs, particularly if the student is unsure of options available.

Contact: 6125 2211 or student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au

ANUSA/PARSA

Student Assistance Advisers provide information and support, including access to legal advice.

Contact: sa.assistance@anu.edu.au

ANU Counselling

These issues can impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing. ANU Counselling provides free psychological mental health support.

Contact: 6125 2211 or counselling.centre@anu.edu.au

Encourage and or support the person involved to report the incident through the WHS system – Figtree where applicable (not applicable for sexual harassment disclosures).

Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment Disclosure

Receiving a disclosure of sexual assault and/or sexual harassment can be a difficult thing. It is important to remember that you are not alone and you can contact an ANU Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Manager if you need support, information or de-briefing.

The following provides you with some steps on how to support someone through a disclosure.

Step 1: Attend to immediate safety needs

Determine if there are any immediate safety or wellbeing concerns for the person who is making the disclosure. For time critical support, call emergency services on 000. If the student is on campus, please also contact ANU UniSafe on (02) 6125 2249.

Step 2: Listen, believe, be supportive and explain your role

It can be very hard for someone to disclose sexual assault and sexual harassment. Find a quiet space to talk and give the person your full attention. Let them tell you at their own pace, without interrupting or asking direct or probing questions about the experience. Silences are okay. Validate their experience by acknowledging their distress. Be upfront about your role and limits to your role. It is ok to say you need assistance from someone to ensure you can provide the best support and information.

Step 3: Refer to support

Part of your role as a first responder is to provide the person with information so they can make an informed choice about what to do next. It is essential for the person making the disclosure to maintain control over their decisions. They may or may not want to talk to a support service.

ANU Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Managers provide confidential information and support and can assist the person to work out what support they need. Student Safety and Wellbeing can be contacted on (02) 6125 2211 or student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre: 7am-11pm DAILY (02) 6247 2525 or 0488 586 518

Police: Triple Zero (000) for emergencies or 131 444 for police assistance (0-000 if calling from an ANU desk phone)

Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment Disclosure

Step 4: Explain disclosure / reporting options

Remind the person they have an option to lodge a disclosure form with the ANU, report to the ANU, or report to the Police. An ANU Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Manager can assist them to clarify the options and provide information on each of the processes.

Maintain confidentiality:

Treat the disclosure respectfully and do not share details with others without the permission of the person who made the disclosure to you. Confidentiality can be waived if the person who is making the disclosure is under 18 or you have concerns about their safety and wellbeing. You can contact a Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Manager for information regarding confidentiality.

Some survivors will not want to pursue resolution pathways at the stage of the disclosure and you need to respect that decision.

Information on making a disclosure and a report with the ANU is available at anu.edu.au/students/health-safety-wellbeing/getting-help-at-anu/sexual-harassment-and-sexual-assault-response

Self-care:

Hearing someone's experience of abuse or assault can be distressing. Give yourself the space and permission to feel whatever it is you feel following any sort of disclosure. There is no "wrong" response, and many people are able to process this news without it affecting on their own health, but let yourself respond as you need to and understand that it can take a few days to have an impact and reach out for support or assistance if you need it.

Supporting a Student in Distress

Studying at university can be a unique and challenging experience. Most students experience elevated stress at some time during their university career.

Students may become distressed (have a strong emotional response) for many reasons, including poor health, stressful life circumstances, mental health concerns like anxiety or depression, family difficulties, relationship problems, pressures of balancing work and study, trauma, grief, sexual assault, harassment or exposure to violence or drug/alcohol use.

Not all students experience distress, and not all distressed students are experiencing signs of mental illness.

Step 1: Recognise the distress

When a student is experiencing difficulty, recognising the signs of acute emotional distress can help the student receive the support they need to cope.

Distress may be indicated by:

- Avoidance
- Tearfulness
- Deterioration in appearance
- Disturbing emails or assessment items
- Increased tension
- Reduced motivation
- Self-harm behaviour
- Direct or indirect talk of suicide
- Statements indicating a sense of worthlessness or helplessness

Step 2: Establish a response

- 1. Acknowledge** their distress in a calm and concerned manner and listen without judgement.
- 2. Assess** level of distress. If the student expresses intentions to harm themselves refer to the information on the suicidal and self-harming risk tab.
- 3. Normalise** access to support services and provide information on services available which include:

Student Safety and Wellbeing

ANU Counselling

ANU Medical Centre

Other community services
e.g. Access Mental Health

Supporting a Student in Distress

4. If the student provides consent, **assist** them to make an appointment and **link** them in with services. Student Safety and Wellbeing can assist the student to navigate services at ANU if they are unsure about which service is most suitable for their needs.

If the student doesn't want to seek help:

- Frame accessing support in a positive way
- Remind them that you don't have to be at crisis point to make an appointment; addressing problems early often leads to better outcomes.
- Provide them with contact details for Student Safety and Wellbeing and encourage them to make direct contact by phone (02) 6125 2211, email student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au or in person.

If you still have concerns, you can request a welfare check to be done by the Police or ANU UniSafe if the student lives in an on campus hall, lodge or residence.

Student Safety and Wellbeing offers drop-in appointments Monday to Friday between 9am – 4pm, depending on a Case Manager's availability. Please call (02) 6125 2211 to check availability.

Examples of Potential Situations:

1. Supporting a student during class, e.g. student has a panic attack, and the academic is required to respond while still looking after a class.

It can be difficult to support a student in distress, particularly if this happens during a lecture, tutorial, practical, etc. If possible, excuse yourself from teaching (maybe you can ask students to continue with some work) and check on the student – ideally move the student to a quiet space. You can see if the student is in a position to attend the Health and Wellbeing building to see a Case Manager or Counsellor (Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm). You can also contact ANU UniSafe for support or get the student on the phone with the ANU Wellbeing and Support Line (24/7) 1300 050 327 or text 0488 884 170 for assistance.

2. Supporting a student who has had a mental health crisis in class but is returning to their student residence on campus – instructions for letting the Residence Management staff know so they can provide support:

With the student's consent, a referral can be made to the Residence Management so that they can discuss any wellbeing plan requirements. If after hours, ask for the student's consent to contact the Senior Duty Officer. Contact details for Residences are available on the ANU contacts tab.

3. Supporting a distressed student due to their academic performance

With the student's consent, a referral can be made to a Case Manager in Student Safety and Wellbeing who can support the student identify issues that could have impacted on their academic performance, refer to academic learning support and help them navigate university processes. You can email the student's name and contact details to student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au and a Case Manager will make contact within 72 hours.

Suicidal or Self-Harming Risk

Talking to someone about suicidal thoughts and feelings can be daunting, but your support could make a huge difference. If you are unsure whether someone is suicidal, the best way to find out is to ask them if they are thinking about suicide. This shows you care and they are not alone. It also allows the other person to talk about their feelings and plans and is the first step to getting help.

Your role as a first responder is to support the person who is having suicidal or self-harming thoughts to access emergency support or professional help.

Step 1: Start the conversation

A helpful way to start the conversation is by checking in on them:

“I’m really worried about you and what you said/wrote in your email/the message that you left”

“I saw what you posted on Facebook, online chat, etc. Do you want to talk?”

“I’m checking in with you because you haven’t seemed yourself lately”

“I am really worried about you and need to ask if you have been thinking about suicide”

Listen to them and acknowledge their distress. During this time, you can check your understanding of their situation and whether they have sufficient support and resources in place or if they need further support.

If you are not physically with the person, obtain details about their current whereabouts (including an address and phone number, which you will need if you request a welfare check from the police or call an ambulance).

Step 2: Enquire about active suicidal thoughts

Check on the presence of active suicidal thoughts to assess risk. Sometimes people can say things like: “I’ve had enough”, “I can’t take this anymore” or “I wish I didn’t feel like this any longer”

This can be an expression of despair without intending self-harm or suicide; but it can also be an indication that the student is considering self-harming or suicide. It is important to check on the presence of active suicidal thoughts. You can do this by asking the following questions:

“Are you having thoughts of suicide?”

“Have you identified a method?”

“Are you thinking about taking your own life?”

“Have you identified when you may act on a suicide plan?”

If the person answers YES to any of these questions, take action.

Step 3: Assess the risk

LOWER RISK: NO to all questions

Active suicidal thoughts are not present.

Risk factors may be present.

HIGHER RISK: YES to any questions

Active suicidal thoughts are present.

Risk factors may be present.

Let the person know that you are concerned about their wellbeing and you want to support them to get the appropriate professional support. Assure them that there are a number of services that can provide support and if possible, assist them to contact one of the services.

Reassure the person they are not alone. You may check in with the person later and enquire how they are. At that point, you could suggest a referral if it is still warranted.

Assist the person to connect with one of the services available at ANU or in the community including:

Students:

- ANU Wellbeing and Support Line (24/7) **1300 050 327** or text **0488 884 170**
- ANU Counselling (Mon - Fri): **(02) 6125 2211**
- ANU Student Safety and Wellbeing (Mon-Fri): **(02) 6125 2211**

Staff:

- Assure: **1800 808 374**
- Relationships Australia **(02) 6122 7100**
- ANU Staff Advisers:
staff.adviser@anu.edu.au

Community:

- Lifeline (24/7): **13 11 14**
- Beyond Blue (24/7): **1800 224 636**
- Suicide Call Back Service:
1300 659 467

If appropriate, you may want to support the person with some initial safety planning (but do ensure you are not solely responsible for their safety).

The Beyond Blue Beyond Now website and mobile app offer a template to support safety planning: beyondblue.org.au/get-support/beyondnow-suicide-safety-planning

Let the person know that you are highly concerned about their immediate safety and need to get help. Stay with them until support arrives. If they are not physically with you (e.g: over the phone /Zoom/ Teams) stay connected – if possible ask someone else to support you.

Call emergency services. If the person leaves or hangs up, call **000** and request the police do a welfare check. If the student is on campus please also call ANU UniSafe on **(02) 6125 2249**.

Call one of the following support services as required:

Emergency Services: 000

ACT Access Mental Health:
1800 629 354

ANU UniSafe: (02) 6125 2249

When making a referral, you could use the following:

“Hello, I am _____ from _____, I have a person with me/on the phone who is at high risk of suicide or self harm.”

“Hello, I am _____ from _____, I have serious concerns about the wellbeing of _____ who has expressed suicidal ideation and is at high risk, can you please do a welfare check?”

If the person you are concerned about is a student who lives in an on-campus residence, contact ANU UniSafe

Services will need a name, phone number and if you are requesting a welfare check or an ambulance, you will also need an address.

Self-care: Consider reaching out to EAP or an ANU Staff Adviser for support following supporting a student through a suicidal or self-harming incident.

Key ANU Student Services Contacts and On Campus Residences Contacts

ANU UniSafe (24/7): (02) 6125 2249

Student Wellbeing and Support Line (24/7): 1300 050 327 or text 0488 884 170

Access and Inclusion: (02) 6125 5036 • access.inclusion@anu.edu.au

Counselling: (02) 6125 2211 • counselling.centre@anu.edu.au

Dean of Students: (02) 6125 4184 • dean.students@anu.edu.au

Medical Centre: (02) 6125 2211 • medical.centre@anu.edu.au

Student Safety and Wellbeing: (02) 6125 2211 • student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au

Tjabal Centre: (02) 6125 4038 • tjabal.centre@anu.edu.au

If you are unsure what support a student may need, you can always refer a student to a Student Safety and Wellbeing Case Manager by phone (02) 6125 2211 or email student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au who can support them to clarify their needs and organise referrals to support on campus and in the community.

On campus residences:

Bruce Hall (02) 6125 6444

Burgmann College (02) 6125 6100

Burton & Garran Hall (02) 6184 0000

Davey Lodge (02) 6125 7900

Fenner Hall (02) 6125 9000

Graduate House (02) 6125 1999

John XXIII College (02) 6125 5900

Kinloch Lodge (02) 6125 7900

Lena Karmel Lodge (02) 6125 7900

Toad Hall (02) 6125 6060

University House (02) 6125 5211

Ursula Hall (02) 6125 6200

Wamburun Hall (02) 6125 5233

Warrumbul Lodge (02) 6125 7900

Wright Hall (02) 6125 6888

Injury management:

For information on supporting someone through an injury or illness please visit the University's Work, Health and Safety site services.anu.edu.au/human-resources/health-safety

If emergency medical services are required please call 000.

CRICOS Provider 00120C | ABN: 52 234 063 906

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Any questions about this Guide can be sent to student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au