

Good advice on conversations about well-being

This guide will help you prepare for a conversation with a student who is struggling. The conversation can be initiated either by the student or by you as lecturer/supervisor. Regardless of who takes the initiative for the conversation, there are some issues that are important to consider to ensure that the conversation is a constructive one.

Before the conversation

Consider the following issues before the conversation:

- Consider the time and venue for the conversation.
- Consider the objective of the conversation.
- Consider preparing an agenda for the conversation.
- Consider how much time to allocate to the conversation.
- Consider your role and your boundaries in the conversation.

During the conversation

- 1. Start** by stating explicitly why the conversation is taking place. For example:
 - *You have asked to talk to me. What would you like to discuss with me?*
 - *I've asked you to come in today because I'm concerned about...I've noticed...I'm worried that...*
- 2. During** the interview, it's important that you take a curious, exploratory approach and remain non-judgemental. It's a good idea to describe what you observe about the student, and to ask questions in an open, empathetic manner. For example:
 - *What do you think is the reason that...How do you feel that...*
 - *Can you help me understand why...Do you recognise...*
 - *Can I tell you what I think? I think it might also be about...What do you think about that?*
 - *What do you think might help you? What has helped before?*
 - *Are there any small steps you can take in that direction?*
 - *I think that someone else will be able to help you more because...*
- 3. Finish** by recapping the conversation. It is a good idea to tell the student when you are running out of time. For example:
 - *Now we have ten minutes left. Do you have anything else you think it's important to say? It's also important that we have time to sum up our discussion and discuss where we go from here.*
 - *I'd like to round off our conversation by revisiting what I think are the most important points...*
 - *We discussed that the next step is...*
 - *I think we should sum up our discussion together. What do you think is 'the takeaway message' from our conversation?*
 - *What was it like for you to discuss these things today?*

After the conversation

Consider the following points after the conversation:

- Consider following up on the conversation by email or with a follow-up meeting.
- Consider sharing your experience with a colleague. Particularly if the conversation was difficult for you.