



A Faculty and Staff Guide to Helping Students

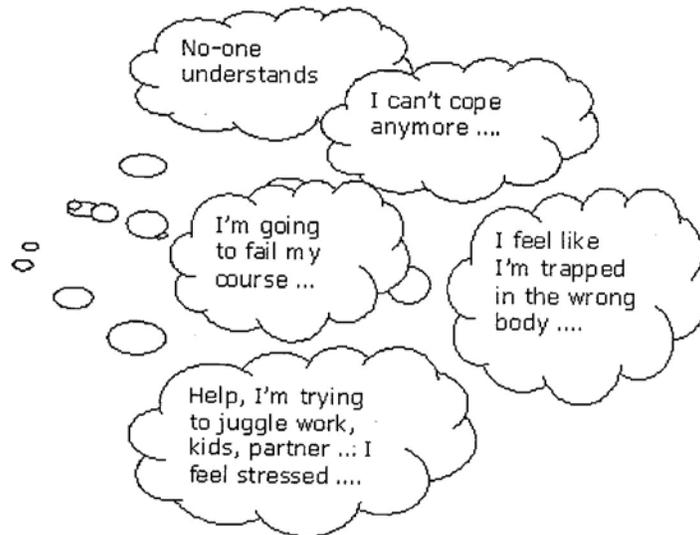


NSCAD UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE 2018

adapted from the UNB-St. John's Guide written by Meredith Henry

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Introduction

Many students encounter difficulties or trouble in their personal, social, academic, career, or emotional lives. Often these students come to the Office of Student Experience or seek Counselling Services on their own. Sometimes, however, they are referred by others at the University who become aware of their distress and hope that counselling might be helpful. In fact, faculty and staff who have frequent contact with students are in an excellent position to identify troubled students and assist them in getting the help they need.

This booklet is intended to give you guidelines about referring students. It will provide you with information about NSCAD University's services and how to access them in order to assist students with educational, social, career, or personal concerns. It is divided into sections, based on the types of referrals commonly made to the Office of Student Experience:

- 1) Counselling (*pp. 4-16*)
- 2) Disability Services (*pp. 17-18*)
- 3) Academic Advising (*pp. 19-20*)
- 4) Writing Centre (*p. 21*)

Counselling Services Available at NSCAD

During their enrollment at the university, students may need assistance to work through problems or issues that relate to their personal growth and development and to their participation in the university community. The **Office of Student Experience** is available to book you an appointment with an academic advisor or disability resource coordinator, if the issue is academic in nature or related to a disability, or with an on-site counselor for mental health concerns. NSCAD's new on-site mental health counsellor is available five days per week in the afternoons (12 – 4 pm), and appointments can be made through the Office of Student Experience (902-494-8260). If a student has an ongoing mental health problem for which they will need the services of a registered psychologist, the Office of Student Experience can make referrals out to a psychologist for longer term or more intensive care.

Students can refer themselves to outside psychologists for counseling directly. NSCAD's Student Health Insurance providers cover at least \$1000 per year in psychological services.

For more information about mental health resources for NSCAD students, visit [NSCAD's Wellness page](#), with a wealth of resources for students/faculty and community support contacts.

Common Causes of Emotional Distress

- Relationship break-up
- Family conflict
- Loss of a loved one
- Divorce
- Feeling lonely
- Academic pressure or failure
- Serious illness or injury of self or others
- Difficulty adjusting to university
- Homesickness
- Not fitting in with peers
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Religious conflicts
- Sexual or physical abuse or assault
- Identity confusion
- Depression
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Career indecision
- Loss of goal or dream
- Occupational setback
- Body image issues
- Coming out issues

Signs of Student Distress Which Require Immediate Referral or Attention

- Expressions of suicidal thoughts or *intent*
- Expression of violence towards others
- Severe loss of emotional control
- Bizarre behaviour or gross impairment in thinking ability

For Emergency Assistance:

Mon – Fri. 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Call the Office of Student Experience: 494-8260

After hours,

if danger to self or others appears imminent,

call campus security: 492-8778

or the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team:

1-888-429-8167

Common Warning Signs of Students' Distress

Academic signs:

- Career and course indecision
- Excessive procrastination
- Uncharacteristically poor preparation or performance
- Repeated requests for extensions or special considerations
- Disruptive classroom behaviour
- Excessive absence/tardiness
- Avoiding or dominating discussions
- References to suicide or homicide in verbal statements, writing or art work
- Uncharacteristic lack of participation

Interpersonal signs:

- Asking instructor for help with personal problems
- Dependency on advisor or avoidance of advisor
- Disruptive behaviour
- Inability to get along with others
- Complaints from other students
- Withdrawal from others

Behavioural signs:

- Change in personal hygiene
- Dramatic weight gain or loss
- Frequently falling asleep in class
- Irritability
- Unruly behaviour
- Impaired speech
- Disjointed thoughts
- Tearfulness
- Intense emotion
- Inappropriate responses
- Difficulty concentrating

**Unsure if some "signs" indicate student distress
in a particular situation?**

**Trust your instincts and consult a
colleague or the counsellor.**

Responding to the Student in Need: How can you help?

If you have noticed warning signs, you are faced with the decision of whether to intervene. Your interest in your student's well-being can make an important difference to a person in distress. If you decide to intervene, here are some suggestions that will help you to be a good listener and to increase a student's willingness to accept a referral to Counselling Services or other resources:

- Talk to the student privately to help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- Listen carefully to the student, and respond to both the content and the emotions of the situation. For example, "Sounds as if you are disappointed because the test did not go as you expected." OR "You feel sad because you didn't get accepted to the program in which you are really interested."
- Discuss your observations and perceptions of the situation directly and honestly with the student. For example, "I notice you haven't attended class lately and that is uncharacteristic of you."
- Express your concern in a non-judgmental way.
- Respect the student's value system, even if you don't agree with it.

- Be frank with the student about the limits of your ability to help them.
- If the student appears to be in imminent danger of hurting his/herself or others, consult campus security **(492-8778)** or the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Services **(1-888-429-8167)** immediately. If the student discusses thoughts of harm to self or others call the counsellor. Do not promise to keep threats to self or others a secret.
- Discuss campus resources. If the student is interested, make a referral to NSCAD's counsellor.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

While sometimes difficult to do, it is important that you realize the limits of your own responsibility when assisting distressed students. If you are involved in an intervention with a student:

- It does not mean you must (or can) resolve the student's difficulties
- You are not responsible for the student's emotional wellbeing. Responding to distressed students can be emotionally challenging. It is important to obtain support for yourself, from colleagues, partners, friends, or consultation with the Office of Student Experience.

Making a Referral to the Office of Student Experience

Presenting yourself as knowledgeable about campus services can ease a student's discomfort about seeking help. Here are some suggestions for emergency and non-emergency situations.

Emergency Referrals

Emergencies are those situations that require immediate attention (e.g., situations in which a student is highly agitated, cases in which there is an immediate danger of harm to oneself or others, instances in which a student's ability to function is substantially impaired and normal coping skills are not working).

- If the emergency occurs during OSE office hours, call **494-8260** and ask to speak to the counsellor or the Disability Resource coordinator.
- Provide them with a description of the situation which has led to your concern.
- They will gladly consult with you about how to make a referral and discuss whether immediate intervention is necessary.
- Whenever possible, inform the student in crisis that you are sharing information with the counsellor.
- If emergency situations should arise outside of office hours, students may be referred to the ***Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team (1-888-429-8167)***.

Non-emergency Referrals

- Invite the students to call or visit the Office of Student Experience to schedule an initial appointment with the counsellor. Let the student know that, except in emergency situations, it may take a few days to be seen.
- Offer to let the student call from your office if you believe he/she needs the extra support and encouragement.
- Consult with the counsellor when you think the student's circumstances may require an immediate appointment. She will assist you in determining whether emergency intervention is warranted and talk with you about the specific arrangements that need to be made.
- Assure the student that our counsellor is a competent, well-trained therapist.
- Discuss the counsellor's confidentiality policy that is outlined on the page 16 of this booklet.
- Provide student with expectations for his/her first visit to Counselling Services.
- Provide information on other resources (*Office of Student Experience: Academic Advising – 494-8260; Financial Aid – 494-8130; Services for International Students – 444-7213; Services for Students with Disabilities – 494-8313; Writing Centre Tutors – jmilton@nscad.ca*).

What About Students Who Are Reluctant to Go to Counselling?

If it seems clear that a student needs or could benefit from counselling, but is reluctant to go, you might mention any of the following that seem appropriate for that student:

- The student can try one session to see if this is potentially helpful.
- The visit will be kept strictly confidential.
- All the student has to do to get an appointment is go to the counsellor's office, e-mail, or telephone.
- It's free.
- Students with very troubling concerns often get help from NSCAD's counsellor or at DAL Counselling Services.
- A person doesn't have to be having a crisis to go see a counsellor.
- The student can call and speak to the counsellor or visit the DAL Counselling webpage (<http://counsellingservices.dal.ca>) to learn more.
- The counsellor will make referrals to agencies in the community if the student prefers to go elsewhere for therapy.

Accepting the Student's Right to Say No

Except in certain life-threatening situations (suicidal intent, violence towards others), the choice of whether to seek professional help at Counselling Services is completely up to that individual.

If a distressed student remains adamant about not seeking counselling, you need to accept the student's decision.

If you are quite concerned about such a student, consult with the counsellor. Perhaps the counsellor could suggest alternative ways of approaching the student, to help you more effectively intervene on the student's behalf, or confirm that you have done all that you could do.

Following Up: What can you expect?

Once you have connected the student with Counselling Services, you might be curious about how counselling and the student's concerns are going. You can follow-up with the students by asking how he/she is doing - this communicates your ongoing concern/care for the student and lets him/her know that you also continue to be a resource to him/her, if that is a role you are comfortable fulfilling. Keep in mind that change is a process, and usually it is a slow and variable one. Therefore, it may be useful for you to share this with the student and to keep this in mind yourself as you look for the student's improvement. You cannot follow-up with the counsellor to see how the student is doing, however, because the counsellor is bound by the principles of confidentiality as defined by the profession. These are listed on the next page.

Protecting the Student's Confidentiality

This means:

- We *cannot* give information about the student without permission from the student.
- We *cannot* say whether the student has come for an appointment.
- We *cannot* discuss any specifics of the situation.
- We *can* answer your general questions about making referrals to Counselling Services.
- We *can* offer you information about psychological concerns and problems in general.
- We *can* provide other referral ideas.
- We *can* take information from you regarding specific behaviours of the student, though whenever possible we ask that you inform the student that you are sharing information with US.
- We will thank you for your concern and interest.

Take Care of Yourself

Responding to distressed students can trigger complex personal thoughts and feelings for faculty and staff. It is important to obtain support for yourself as you engage in work with students in distress. This support might come from colleagues, partners, friends, or through consultation with NSCAD's counsellor.

Other Support Services for Students at NSCAD:

Support for Students with Disabilities

As part of the NSCAD Student Experience team, the Disability Resource Coordinator works with students who have disabilities, including learning disabilities, physical or cognitive challenges and/or mental health concerns.

Based on the needs of the individual student, a variety of supports and assistance can be put into place, with the goal of reducing or eliminating students' barriers to learning and/or expressing knowledge of course material. Post-Secondary students in Canada with documented disabilities are legally entitled to have their disability-related needs accommodated, with very few exceptions. To secure these supports, it is the student's responsibility to meet with the Disability Resource Coordinator within the first two weeks of each semester to discuss accommodation needs.

This assistance can include but is not necessarily limited to:

- Securing tutoring and/or note takers
- Acting as a scribe for oral testing
- Assistance in obtaining/requesting classroom accommodations (i.e. extra time for tests and assignments, alternative testing formats, note taking, permission to tape record lectures, etc.)
- Training on assistive technology software
- Assistive technology loans and work stations on campus

- Working one-on-one in helping with editing/organizing written assignments (when NSCAD's Writing Tutors are not available)
- Referral for Learning Disability prescreening (for students who think they may have a Learning Disability but haven't been tested)
- Support in working with caseworkers of the Department of Community Services (if applicable)
- Providing information and/or application assistance to the various funding programs available for students with disabilities. Most government grants require student loan eligibility – those who are eligible for a student loan may be eligible to apply for additional funding.

For more information, please refer to NSCAD's *General Policy on Students with Disabilities*, on the NSCAD website. If you have any questions about appropriate accommodations for students with different types of disabilities, or if you would like to know more about Nova Scotia's Accessibility Legislation (Bill 59), please do not hesitate to contact NSCAD's Disability Resource Coordinator, **Bill Travis**, at **494-8313**.

Academic Advising

The Office of Student Experience provides information and advice on academic issues related to an individual student's program of studies. The Advisors in the OSE office are available by appointment or, during registration periods, on a drop-in basis.

During an individual Academic Advising appointment, the advisor may:

- Review with the student his/her academic program, courses completed and remaining requirements
- Discuss program selection (BFA, BDes, BA) and Majors and Minors
- Discuss course selections, prerequisites, and (if relevant) grades required
- Discuss graduation requirements

Students are encouraged to read the **Academic Calendar** and **Web Advisor** (online) carefully and are encouraged to take responsibility for their academic goals. Students are expected to make themselves familiar with the university and academic regulations as well as the program and course requirements.

If perusal of the Academic Calendar and Web Advisor does not supply the answer to your question, or if you wish to discuss your particular needs, please contact the Office Student Experience to make a personal appointment.

During peak periods (Add/Drop period, Credit Priority course selection, beginning of semester) advising appointments will fill quickly, so students are encouraged to make appointments outside of these times so that they may plan appropriately.

Email: registrar@nscad.ca

Phone: (902) **494-8260**

Writing Resource Centre

The process of writing allows individuals to create knowledge and to share knowledge. The Centre provides tutoring and resources to the university community. Students at any stage of study, from Foundation to Graduate level, are encouraged to bring their writing concerns to the Centre. The Centre provides individual consultations and group workshops. The aim of the Writing Centre is to help students develop their own critical voices for reading, discussion, and writing to exchange ideas within the academic community. Students may bring questions, ideas, drafts of work in progress, or graded work to the tutors for feedback and suggestions. Handouts and other resources are also available.

The Writing Resource Centre is located in the Seeds Building, Room 403.

Appointments are booked through NSCAD's online room booking system: <https://mrbs.nscad.ns.ca> (and choose Seeds Room S403).

If these times all conflict with your class schedule, please contact **Jane Milton**, Director of Writing Resources. Email: jmilton@nscad.ca

DIRECTORY OF RESOURCES IN THIS BOOKLET

Academic Advising:	(902) 494-8260
Financial Aid:	(902) 494-8130
Counselling Services:	(902) 494-8260
Disability Services:	(902) 494-8313
HRM Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team:	1 (888) 429-8167
International Student Issues:	(902) 444-7213
Security - Granville Campus:	(902) 492-8778
Port Campus:	(902) 442-4218
Writing Centre (tutors):	jmilton@nscad.ca