Student welfare: information and advice for staff
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Foreword

Royal Holloway prides itself on offering a very high standard of pastoral support to its students. The expertise in offering this is not owned by any one section of the College, but has been built up by different College Departments – Support and Advisory Services, Student Life, Academic Departments – working closely in partnership with the Students’ Union, with Health Professionals and specialist groups – and especially with individual students – to develop and refine our approaches.

We have sought to bring together in the guide a summary of what we have learned about supporting students in different situations in a way which we hope is both practical and effective.

We trust individual staff members will find it helpful and that it will increase their confidence, both in dealing with students in difficult circumstances and in when necessary referring them on.

Our grateful thanks to all in the different parts of College and the SU who have helped us in compiling, editing and producing this Guide.

Christopher Butler, Head of Support and Advisory Services on behalf of Royal Holloway, University of London

For students, university can be a confusing and complicated time, and nothing is more confusing than finding out whether help exists, is right for you and where to get it from. Students will turn to their Personal Tutors first, or the friendly lecturer they meet once a week as a part of their course. This is particularly true of students who are different or marginalised, often not going to the advice services available until it is far too late. This is what this booklet is for – accurate and consistent signposting to the essential support services Royal Holloway is renowned for.

This booklet is a joint Partnership between the Students’ Union and Royal Holloway University, creating solutions together to improve the lives and experiences of both students and staff. We hope you find it useful, and to build on it in the years to come.

Introduction

Academic Departmental staff – and in particular Personal Advisors and Departmental Administrators – represent the most constant and reliable form of contact between students and the College. Students in crisis may approach our central Welfare and Wellbeing Services (Support & Advisory Services), but often departmental staff will be the best placed to initially notice any signs of difficulty and to then be able to support the student or direct them to further help.

The first and most obvious cause for concern is if the student disappears. In the more distant past it has been thought to be largely the student’s choice whether they attend all lecturers etc. and if they feel they can absorb the learning without attendance, they have been allowed to do so. However, attendance monitoring has become more important. Firstly it was introduced for International Students to comply with UKVI (latterly Home Office) guidelines. Then it was found to be beneficial to all students as failure to attend was often found to be the first apparent sign of more serious issues. We would suggest staff are vigilant for missing students, and when they are found to have gone absent without leave, that they follow up the reason. If they cannot contact or locate a student they should follow a range of different options to locate them (personal visits if the student is in hall or in the local area; tracing via support services if they have approached us for help; contact via social media or friendship groups if not and as a last resort contact via the next of kin).

If you are aware a student is dealing with a difficult issue, there is advice on the following pages on how to support them. Please do not hesitate to contact S&AS, even if it only to notify us of the matter. We maintain a list of “vulnerable students” which covers all students in difficult circumstances (whether these be health related, personal circumstances, involvement in crime as either a victim or a perpetrator or other issues) and all students, whatever the issue, are treated as being in need of our help support and guidance wherever possible, rather than as in need of sanction.

Generally in terms of meeting with students, little and often is more useful than intense occasional engagements. If a student is developing signs of any mental health difficulty say, regular meetings will allow a change in demeanour to be spotted. If a student is in a serious crisis, encouragement to seek more specialised support with a follow-up will be more useful than a single attempt to solve the problem. If a student is wrestling with deadlines, encouragement to complete a limited amount of work and return will be more encouraging than merely postponing the final deadline.

If you are generally worried about a student, Support & Advisory Services can be contacted:

E: welfare@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443394
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/

If you want to refer a student to counselling or the Health Centre:

Student Counselling
E: counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443128

Health Centre
T: 01784 443131
Boundaries and confidentiality
Staff should never promise confidentiality to a student; we suggest you advise them “I am afraid I cannot promise confidentiality, especially if there is a possibility of harm to someone, but I will of course treat what you tell me with discretion”. Maintain that discretion and do not disclose what you know about a student to other students. Never disclose information to non-College members, especially parents, friends etc. Fellow students do not have this constraint; we cannot encourage them to contact a student’s family, but we can acquiesce if they choose to do so. You may give Police necessary information to deal with an actual incident and make a witness statement, but leave it to us to help ongoing enquiries. Further advice on this can be found within the College’s codes on Data Protection and Parental contact.

If you find yourself in a personal relationship with a student, you have a duty of disclosure as stipulated in the College’s Guidelines on Personal Relationships between Staff, Students and Others, which are available on the Campus Intranet and cover business connections as well as friendships and intimate relationships.

Advice on all disclosure issues can be readily obtained from the Head of Support and Advisory Services. The Head of S&AS can often allay or verify concerns about students by consulting colleagues in the central welfare services who may be in touch with the students. The role also has authority, where necessary, to involve a student’s parents when there are clear indicators of risk.

General wellbeing
Wellbeing encompasses physical, mental and sexual health, stress, tiredness, relationships & lifestyle choices. Wellbeing and studying go hand in hand, if one is suffering then it is bound to impact the other. Everybody has times when their wellbeing suffers; this may be temporary or long term. Coming to Royal Holloway will be a big change for all students and adapting to university life can be difficult but we encourage students to embrace opportunities and make the most of their time at Royal Holloway. However university is not always plain sailing and there are plenty of support services available to listen and help when students need it.

The Community, Wellbeing and Student Outreach team help and support students throughout their studies at Royal Holloway and would encourage students to come forward to seek help and advice before the issue becomes overwhelming. They can provide support to students on transition and adjustment to university life, aid the continuation of their studies and provide support and advice on a range of wellbeing issues.

E: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443394
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/wellbeing/wellbeinghome.aspx
Immediate help – distress and mental health issues

For students in immediate distress, crisis or who are concerned about their own mental health and wellbeing or that of a friend, or for staff who are concerned there are details of support networks at royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/emergencies.aspx; this includes working day support and out of hours support. During the working day we would recommend students in extreme distress are brought to the Health Centre as the first port of call.

If someone is in distress and maybe even talking about harming themselves we would suggest the following steps, summed up in the acronym COPE.

Be Caring: in particular never ignore or take lightly a suggestion of suicide. Research shows most people who attempt suicide normally tell someone else of their intentions first. Ask more and do not be afraid that talking about the threat will put ideas into the person’s mind. It is more likely they will appreciate being taken seriously.

Be Optimistic: Most human problems can be solved with time, care and expert help no matter how hopeless they seem. You do not have to give up hope just because someone else has temporarily lost theirs. However, do not let your optimism lead you to dismiss or make light of the person’s concerns.

Be Practical: Do not leave those expressing serious self-harming intent alone, especially if the means of self-harm are at hand. Involve others - using the emergency services if necessary. Be particularly vigilant if someone is intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, if they have made a suicide attempt in the past, or if they have a clearly formulated plan. Do not however get drawn into making unrealistic long term promises of ongoing support that you are unlikely to be able to keep.

Seek an Expert: If the person in distress refuses to involve any sources of help once the immediate crisis is passed consider contacting them yourself in order to plan what steps can be taken to get support for yourself and your friend.

It is strongly advised that anyone contemplating suicide seeks assistance at the earliest possible time. We would never seek to minimise the problems that can lead students to contemplate ending their lives – often they are problems of great severity which carry with them deep feelings of shame, loneliness and hopelessness. However, most research and anecdotal experience suggests the despairing thought which makes a person feel the only way to resolve the problem by suicide is normally a misguided one and almost invariably when the crisis has passed they express the relief they did not act upon their suicidal intentions. Support & Advisory Services will be pleased to answer any questions departmental staff may have about these issues.
Very occasionally a student will not just be troubled but may be contemplating ending their life. This is not overly common – about 1 in 10,000 students in the UK commit suicide each year. If you are worried about a student, it is helpful to be aware that the two most indicative factors used in assessment of suicide risk are whether there is clear intent – i.e. the student has definitely decided to act in this way and maybe even has made some plans – and whether there has been a previous attempt. Do gently follow up any hints a student gives of suicidal thinking and refer them to student counselling and the Health Centre and alert us.

Undiagnosed or unacknowledged physical illness is much less common. However if a student does seem to be frequently unwell – possibly absent with a range of ailments or fatigued – do refer them to the Health Centre. Our Health Centre is highly accessible and it makes sense for any ailment to be diagnosed promptly both so it can be treated and so it can be recorded for certification if needed.

Finally, there is the possibility that a student may have an undiagnosed Specific Learning Difficulty. Although there is much greater awareness of conditions like dyslexia nowadays, a student may have managed to date with compensatory strategies but may now get behind with reading etc. because of the greater demands of university level study. The Dyslexia and Disability Services (ESO) offer a screening service for any student who feels they may have an unrecognised difficulty.
Support for students

Through our campus based Health Centre students can seek out of hours medical support by calling 01753 865773. When they call this number they will need the surgery details: Dr Denny & partners, Clarence Medical, Royal Holloway, University of London. Alternatively the NHS can be contacted for advice on 111 at any time.

Residential Support Assistants (RSAs) are trained student volunteers who live in halls, with other students. RSAs are on-duty every evening from 7pm and over the weekend, and support students in halls with welfare issues, complaints and emergencies alongside the Security Services. RSAs may visit students if the College is concerned about them, if there are reports of inappropriate behaviour or a breach of regulations, or in response to calls to Security by distressed students or those being disturbed by noise, etc. They also host flat meetings to help flatmates/roommates solve any issues they may be involved in.

Out of hours support for students

College security are available 24/7 on 01784 443063 and can mobilise support from welfare staff for major emergencies at all times.

Support for students for welfare and wellbeing issues is managed through Support & Advisory Services. Royal Holloway is proud to be a friendly and caring community, which offers an extremely high level of student support to help students get the most out of their time here. Our teams provide assistance to students who may need some extra support to enable them to manage their own educational and personal progression and we have a range of specialist staff available. For further details please visit royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/staffdirectory.aspx

All teams are available through the working day and out of hours emergency support is partially covered by a welfare staff call out rota via security (see below).
having. They will be identified by a purple t-shirt and ID card, and can be contacted by students visiting their Hall Reception or calling Security.

**London Nightline** is a confidential advice centre run by students for students who are available to listen to any problems, no matter how big or small. They are open out of hours from 18:00 - 08:00 evenings and weekends term time only. All students are very understanding and have received extensive training. Your students can contact London Nightline in these ways:

E: listening@nightline.org.uk  
(Aim to respond within 48 hours)  
T: 0207 631 0101  
Instant message (via Skype):  
nightline.org.uk/content/online-listening  
Skype:  
nightline.org.uk/content/call-us-on-skype

The **Samaritans** can be contacted 24/7 throughout the year. The quickest way for students to get in contact with them is to call. Calls are made anonymously, as are any emails students send. The Samaritans are there to listen to everybody no matter what.

T: 08457 909090  
E: jo@samaritans.org  
(email addresses are removed & they aim to respond within 12 hours)

**Chaplaincy and faith support**

There are two College Chaplains and a part-time Islamic Faith Adviser. Chaplaincy aims to be a support and resource for the whole college community and they work with anyone regardless of faith or belief. They readily meet with people on a one to one basis to offer support on as a regular or a one off meeting. The focus is the whole person and conversations may or may not involve a discussion of faith or spirituality. They talk to people about their everyday life as well as major events, illness and bereavement.

The provision of space for quiet reflection is also something that they look after and both the Chapel and Breathe - a multi-faith space and meeting room for small groups - are available. They do have regular users, but if anyone is enquiring about where to find a reflective space on campus the team will be happy to support them.

If people have specifically religious questions they can talk to them, or help them to find a person of their faith that is suitable for them to talk to. They also liaise with the SU faith societies and choirs. On the Faith Support webpage there are guidelines for students who might have concerns over any groups or events that they have attended.

E: chaplaincy@royalholloway.ac.uk  
T: 01784 443070  
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/campuslife/faithsupport.aspx
Disabled students

A disabled student is a student with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial effect on his/her normal day-to-day activities at Royal Holloway. College has legal duties to make adjustments so that these students are not put at a substantial disadvantage because of their impairment. Such adjustments can take the form of additional support, exams access arrangements or alternative assessment, and/or modification of teaching practices.

Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) coordinate the organisation of this extra support and adjustments. The package of support is then communicated to network member(s) in each department (royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/disabledstudents/adviceforstaff.aspx) who ensure that all teaching staff are aware of each student’s needs.

Therefore you will need to check with the network member in your department which of your student has a disability and what individual support should be put in place for each of them. You are advised to then meet with these students individually and go through the adjustments that the department will put in place in accordance with the package of support agreed. Please inform Disability & Dyslexia Services if there are discrepancies with what the student expects to receive or the support they tell you they need.

Below are some of the most common issues that a student might seek your help on and suggestion on how to help:

• A student is unsure that all their tutors know about their disabilities or needs and / or says not all the adjustments detailed in their support package have been put in place

Your response: please email their tutors to remind them of the student’s disability and indicate to them where to find the package of support agreed

• They are missing classes or assignments, maybe they are about to receive a formal warning. This may be an indication that the support put in place is insufficient, ineffective or obsolete because the student’s needs have changed

Your response: Please contact Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) at the earliest opportunity

• The student seeks an extension on the grounds of disability. This is very rare adjustment to have as part of the package of support. We believe that it is in students’ interest to keep up with the timetable of submission in order to avoid procrastination and work backlog
Your response: Please refer to these guidelines on the web and check if extensions are part of the support package. Contact Disability and Dyslexia Services (ESO) to arrange some study skills sessions royalholloway.ac.uk/iquad/services/academicqualityandpolicyoffice/guidanceforacademicstaff.aspx

• The student is tearful, upset, their physical appearance or social interactions have changed (weight, personal hygiene, lack of social interactions of a previously sociable person). This may be a sign that the disabled student is developing a mental health condition

Your response: please contact Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) so that we can reach out to the student

You should also contact the Network Member or Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) if you think one of your students has a long standing medical condition which impacts on their studies for which support should be put in place.

These are the most common issues which may indicate that a student has a disability that s/he has not declared:

• Their written work does not match their oral contribution in class; it lacks structure, is full of spelling and grammatical errors, and not very well researched. These could be signs of an underlying Specific Learning Difficulty.

Your response: please advise the student to contact the Disability and Dyslexia Services (ESO) team so that we can screen the student and possibly refer them for a full diagnostic assessment

• A student tells you that they have a disability but that they do not want to declare it. Please remember that a student does not have a duty to declare but that we have a duty to offer support at the first opportunity.

Your response: try to find out the reasons behind his/her reluctance to declare; explain how the support works here; reassure him/her that we are bound by rules of confidentiality and that only the people involved in putting in place the support will be informed of the disability; explain the benefits of disclosure and offer to contact us on their behalf. Refer to the advice on our webpages

• A student becomes visibly unwell and you realise that the medical condition is not temporary.

Your response: refer the student to Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO).

Financial welfare
Student Finance applications can be delayed or incorrect, so if a student is concerned that they haven’t received their loan payment there may be parts of the process that they still need to complete. If a student is experiencing financial difficulty they will need to contact the financial welfare team to discuss their situation. The university will look to assist those who find themselves in financial hardship and we will help them to apply for funding. When things
Support for students continued

do go wrong with their money they may look to applying for a payday loan. We strongly discourage students taking out these loans and can instead provide a student with a short term loan, which is interest free. Alongside this a student may benefit from some budgeting advice and look at ways to save money, we are happy to go through their monthly expenditure to ensure they are getting the most out of their student loans and grants.

All full time students are exempt from paying council tax and need to download a student status certificate from campus connect. Students also need to be aware that they need their own television licence if they are living in halls of residence. Students who are living in private accommodation will need one licence to cover the property.

Information about the funding opportunities that are available to students can be found on the website: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/finance/financialdifficulty.aspx

E: financialadvice@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 276109
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/finance/financialsupport.aspx

International students

Studying overseas offers many exciting opportunities but it can be challenging adjusting to a new environment and dealing with a number of concerns as an international student. The international student support office offer advice on a range of issues including:

• Visas and immigration
• Right to work in the UK
• Getting a National Insurance Number
• Police Registration

Healthcare

Our health centre is a branch surgery of the Clarence Medical Centre in Windsor and being located on campus means it is easy for students to access a wide range of health care throughout the year. The team of GPs and Nurse Practitioners offer support to maintain students’ health and wellbeing alongside the wider welfare teams. They offer a full range of NHS services plus enhanced services including a weekly sexual health clinic, access to Talking Therapies, on site Mental Health support and physiotherapy. We encourage students living on campus or locally to register with them when they arrive as health care plays an important part in our holistic approach to welfare support.

T: 01784 443131
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/campuslife/healthcentre/home.aspx
Mature students and students with families

Mature students are invited to and encouraged to attend UniStart, a pre-arrival event which is dedicated to assisting students with the transition to university. The event is held over two days and students will spend time learning about university life, the extra-curricular activities and the academic work that they will undertake. It also provides a platform for students to share any concerns they have about starting at university. Each year there are representatives for mature students and students who are parents and/or carers elected in the Students’ Union to support the needs of students.

Childcare nursery provision on campus is provided by Bright Horizons. Further information regarding this facility and contact information can be found on the website: brighthorizons.co.uk/our-nurseries/englefield-green/about-this-nursery/overview.

For all general queries students’ first contact should be:
E: welfare@royalholloway.ac.uk

If a non-native student has concerns regarding the academic challenges of studying at a British university we would advise that they contact CEDAS (Centre for the Development of Academic skills). They run a range of courses, workshops and one to one consultations coverings skills such as essay writing, presentation skills, participating in discussions as well as grammar and pronunciation. They work closely with academic departments.

E: cedas@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443368
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/cedas/home.aspx
Support for students continued

Mental health

Central mental health support is provided by the Health Centre, the Mental Health Adviser (within Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO)), and student counselling with the support of external services such as Talking Therapies. On-site NHS provision includes access via referral to a CPN, psychiatrist, psychologist, eating disorders specialist and self-referral to Talking Therapies. Good mental health is central to a healthy university and promoting healthy communication has the potential to enrich the well-being of both students and staff.

The link between mental health and education has been well established – positive mental health promotes success in studying, and poor mental health has an adverse effect on academic achievement (Andrews, & Wilding, 2004). The impact of mental health diagnoses on academic performance and retention is an important area for Royal Holloway. As the student population rises, the diversity in social and cultural diversity rises with it, heightening the prevalence of distress caused by financial troubles; effects of the economic recession; or loneliness, both socially and with regards to family. All of these have a large impact on a student’s mental health, and when paired with an intense workload, it is important for department staff to promote good mental health in our students.

It is easy to feel wary of supporting someone with a mental health diagnosis, and feedback from academic staff within Royal Holloway has highlighted they are unsure of what to say, or how best to support them. It is important to remember that you do not have to be an expert to talk about mental health. There are simple things to consider when communicating with a student with a diagnosed condition:

- Talk about the things you need to discuss – of course you are there to ensure they
are doing well academically but listen too. Simply allowing the student to address their concerns will mean a lot.

- Keep in touch with your student – do not always expect them to reach out to you if they are experiencing problems. A quick email from you may be what is needed to instigate the contact.
- Don’t just talk about their mental health or negative aspects on their study. Talk about everyday things as well, and highlight their strengths to balance out the negatives.
- Remind the student that you care – your role is to ensure that they feel supported in their department, so let them know. It can be easy for a student with a mental health concern to feel like a burden, or that people do not want to know.
- Be patient – the student will have their ups and downs, as everyone does, but it may be more visible. Be patient with them.

Stigma of mental health diagnoses can be prevalent, and has a large impact on an individual’s ability to cope. Many individuals describe the effects of stigma and discrimination to be worse that the actual symptoms of their diagnoses. The cycle of social exclusion demonstrates how stigma worsens mental health:
- Withdrawal and Rejection
- Unable to study/Unemployment
- Debt
- Homelessness
- Loss of social networks
- Back to withdrawal

Try to alleviate the effects of stigma, which could manifest in your opinions and comments made to the student: for example; having low expectations of a student’s academic ability.

This is perhaps the only period in an individual’s life in which work, leisure, accommodation, social life, medical care, counselling and social support are all provided in a single environment (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011). As we provide such a breadth of support, it is important that the departments are well coordinated to provide seamless support to students and aid their academic success. Contact Disability and Dyslexia Services (ESO) to ensure they are aware and supporting students as much as they can. They provide numerous support provisions that could be useful.

E: disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443416
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/wellbeing/mentalhealth.aspx
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/disabledstudents/home.aspx


Support for students continued

Student administration and the Student Services Centre
The Student Services Centre, based in the Windsor building, is a central point of contact for students who have any non-academic related queries. They are able to assist students with queries relating to:

- Enrolment (online sign-up and ID check)
- Tuition fee billing
- Fee payments
- Confirmation of student status
- Travel concessions (Railcard & 18+ Oyster schemes)
- Changes to personal and study details
- Replacement college cards
- Advice on requesting a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for visa renewals
- Updating passport and visa information on the college system
- Graduation ceremonies
- Transcripts & proof of award letters for previous students
- Student accommodation
- Examinations
- Verification of qualifications to third party organisations

E: student-enquiries@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 276641
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/ssc

Students under the age of 18
The university does not act in loco parentis and under 18 students are treated as adults. If a student’s parents wish for their son/daughter to have additional support or oversight this is something they must arrange themselves.

All under 18 students should have a parent’s address and phone number as an emergency contact on their records. If the student is from the EU or is an international student their parents should also nominate somebody who lives in the UK to act as an emergency contact and guardian. In emergency medical situations if a guardian or parent cannot be contacted immediately then the university will act on medical advice and authorise treatment. Under 18s will be made aware of UK law prior to their arrival and should know what they can and cannot do. Under 18 students are usually able to go to the Students’ Union in the evening but will not be allowed to purchase or consume alcohol.

The same level of confidentiality and data protection applies with regards to those seeking information from the university about a student who is under 18. In most circumstances the university will not share or discuss academic or personal information about the students unless we have their expressed consent to do so. There are other, more rare, circumstances when parents may need to be contacted, such as to ensure college debts are paid, but only certain members of staff will have the authority to do this.

If any issues arise with one of your students who are under 18 we ask you to contact the Community, Wellbeing & Student Outreach team to notify them as they are
Students’ Union

The Advice & Support Centre offers independent advice and support to students. The range of issues can be anything from housing, to academic appeals or finance worries. They can be found on the top floor of the SU and usually take appointments, though drop-ins are available. They can be contacted via advice@su.rhul.ac.uk, by visiting Reception in person or telephoning the number below.

Other services include U-Let, a not-for-profit lettings agency also located on the top floor of the SU. They help students find other housemates and homes during their time here, and put student satisfaction first.

Not all of the events provided by the SU involve drinking on nights out – there are markets, comedy night, forums involving tea and taster sessions to have the opportunity of trying something new. Campaigns are run by the Co-President Welfare & Diversity around Mental Health, Sexual Health, Stress busting and Housing, amongst other issues too.

Student Activities is the main hub of sports and societies, offering students an active lifestyle on and off campus through a range of activities, it’s easy to sign up to many extracurricular activities and a great way to meet new people. Our media suite is student led, boasting a radio station, magazine and TV station that requires student input.

A Students’ Union is also about engaging and representing students – everything from student views on their academic course voiced via the Course Representatives, to officers based on characteristics and identity e.g. an LGBT+, Black & Ethnic Minority, Women & Marginalised Genders, Disabled Students, Postgraduate and International Students officers. They work to form student networks and create change both locally and nationally.

E: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443394

E: reception@su.rhul.ac.uk
T: 01784 276700
W: su.rhul.ac.uk
Study issues
There is a range of sources support available for students who face study issues. It is good practice to try and give a student an indication of their progress on the course so far and identify areas that need improvement. The most common study issues that worry students seem to be time management and procrastination, fear of plagiarism, how to cope with the volume of reading needed on certain courses, academic writing and oral presentation skills. You could refer students who face these issues to other services for non-subject specific support available across College:

Royal Holloway’s Centre for Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS) run:
- Academic skills workshops on reading and writing skills, and on oral communication
- Academic skills for international Students on writing, speaking and listening, grammar and general English
- A course on Contemporary Britain: an introduction to a range of issues and concepts relevant to contemporary British Society which also serves as a way to develop visiting students’ English language skills
- A Mathematics & Statistics advisory service which aims to enable students to develop the skills needed to solve maths and stats problems through face to face discussion with a specialist tutor

CeDAS also offers 30min one-to-one sessions with specialist tutors where students can discuss topics such as how to approach an assignment, use of grammar and punctuation, referencing, structuring ideas... For more information on the courses available from CeDAS, or for information on how students can register for these courses, please refer students to the CeDAS webpages: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/cedas/home.aspx

Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) provides one-to-one study skills support for:
- Students with a suspected or diagnosed Specific Learning Difficulty (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD). These students can see a specialist SpLD tutor who can teach them strategies to minimise the effects of their SpLD on their studies
- Students with any other disabilities or mental health difficulties which have an impact on their studies

These sessions can be booked by contacting the Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) on 01784 443966, disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk or by visiting the main office in person.

The Student Counselling service runs weekly Workshops on stress and time management, procrastination and exams stress (mostly on Thursdays between 3 - 4.30pm in Founder’s West). For further details of the programme please consult their webpages.

Finally, there are a number of online resources accessible to all students, which are available to all students and aimed at developing appropriate skills to meet the demands of studying at university level:
- Skills for Study Campus (accessible to all students via Moodle) royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/academicsupport/studyresources.aspx
- Moodle Course on avoiding plagiarism
- External web resources recommended by CeDAS: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/cedas/onlineresources/home.aspx
Student issues

Accommodation
Halls of Residence
If students have any issues within halls of residence, there are services available to support them.

Maintenance faults should be reported to the student’s Hall Reception (these are Founder’s Reception, Kingswood Reception, Highfield Reception for Highfield Court and Penrose, and the Hub Reception for all halls on the bottom half of campus).

For any other issues in halls, including problems with other residents, the **Residential Support Team** should be their first port of call. The Residential Support Team is primarily concerned with ensuring a safe and enjoyable living environment for everyone. They offer support and advice on hall related issues such as noise disturbances, sharing facilities, getting along with others, living away from home and fire safety awareness. If necessary they administer disciplinary action against those who cause problems for themselves and others, so if a student is having problems in halls because of the behaviour of another student, the Residential Support Team can deal with this appropriately, with any serious breaches of College regulations being passed on to the Student Disciplinary Officer.

It would be a good idea to recommend that students take a look at the Frequently Asked Questions on the Residential Support section of eCampus, which covers what should be done in some of the more common situations and scenarios that we find students complaining about. It’s possible that some students will have issues that can only be sorted by them moving rooms, and in that case they should visit Residential Support to discuss these.

Out of hours, the RSA team can be contacted through Security on 01784 443063.

Private sector
The small size of the local area compared to many other universities has led to Royal Holloway being viewed as a relaxed and peaceful place to study. However students living in the local community can lead to some difficult situations, many of which aim to be managed by the **Community Wellbeing** team who help ensure students behave considerately in the local area. This office advises students about behaviour locally, follow up and respond to complaints made about community issues and provide wellbeing support and advice for students who are not in halls of residence – including those commuting in from further than the immediate local area. They can visit students in the local area about whom concerns are raised – for example welfare concerns or lack of attendance - and update academic departments.

Private sector accommodation advice – in particular contract and landlord issues – should be referred to the **Students’ Union Advice & Support Centre** who also liaise with the University of London Housing service.

Students seeking private sector or emergency accommodation should discuss this initially with the Student Accommodation team within the Student Services Centre.
Student issues continued

Alcohol, drugs & substance use
The misuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances such as legal highs by students is likely to have a number of damaging consequences to their life and study. These include risks to mental and physical health and wellbeing, a negative impact on the ability to study and therefore on academic performance, put users and others in situations where safety and wellbeing is compromised, and increases the likelihood of crime on campus and locally and the risk of people being the victim of crime. Although definite evidence is not available, anecdotal observations suggests that sadly the College has over the last 10 years experienced more student deaths due to substance misuse that suicide or any other illness. Where there is substance abuse, there also seems to be a much higher likelihood of academic failure or underperformance and students with underlying mental health problems seem to be more prone to becoming involved with substance misuse – possibly as an attempt to self-medicate for the mental health symptoms. Unfortunately this approach is often unhelpful as – even if the substances offer short-term relief – they intensify problems over the longer term.

Because of the high likelihood of harmful outcomes we are committed to the pursuit of zero tolerance on the use of illegal substances in the hope of maximising student health, wellbeing and safety. We also have a legal duty to ensure the use of drugs and legal highs is strictly prohibited on campus. Drug use is not conducive to study, often limits students socially and is a high risk activity; a criminal conviction for drug use can limit future career and travel opportunities. However although evidenced and repeated drug use will lead to College disciplinary interventions and review of a students’ registration, especially if dealing is also involved, we will always seek to take a therapeutic and supportive approach when we can, to offer advice and to refer to specialist services if necessary, so do please refer students to us promptly as it is better to discuss the matter with them informally rather than having to take official steps once police have become involved or major events have occurred.

For students who choose to drink socially we ask them to make informed choices, to drink responsibly, not encourage others to drink excessively or against their will, and to consider the health and social impact of alcohol consumption. The current recommendations are that females should not regularly in excess 2–3 units a day and males not more than 3–4 units per day and people should aim to have at least two
alcohol free days each week. We encourage anyone who has concerns about their use of alcohol or that of a friend and those who feel pressurised into drinking by others to seek advice from the welfare services.

E: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk  
T: 01784 443394  
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/wellbeing/alcoholanddrugsawareness.aspx

Anxiety
Anxiety affects many students; the main symptom is a constant feeling of fear, dread or unease, experienced in the short term or long term. People diagnosed with anxiety struggle to relax, worry excessively and often feel very overwhelmed with life. Everybody will feel moments and times of anxiety during their life and small bouts of feeling anxious can be helpful for our performance in demanding situations but a diagnosed anxiety disorder can negatively impact a person’s ability to function in their daily life. University is challenging for all students and many will develop anxiety whilst they are studying here. Signs of anxiety can include:

• Physical: Racing heart, dry mouth, sweating, trembling, disturbed sleep. Intense anxiety can create frequent panic attacks in some students. They may have other physical symptoms such as stomach problems, joint and muscle ache, fatigue and headaches.

• Social: People with anxiety may, or may not, show their anxiety in social situations. Sometimes they withdraw and isolate themselves whereas others can struggle to be alone and are quite dependent on
Student issues continued

Bereavement
Students who are faced with the loss of a family member or close friend will experience a range of emotions which can feel intense and overwhelming making studying difficult. For many students this will be the first time they have faced loss and it will be a long term issue to work through for most people as it tends to be one of the most difficult experiences in life. Academic departments are asked to be sensitive to students who have experienced a loss and to recognise that bereavement is an entirely individual experience that will impact students in very different ways.

Some students have fed back to us that they find it difficult to raise the subject of their bereavement with different lecturing staff so it can be helpful if a central person in the department disseminates the information and different staff then take the initiative to raise the issue if needed.

Thoughts:
People with anxiety tend to catastrophise situations and ‘blow them out of proportion’ even though they believe these are legitimate, serious concerns that have happened or are likely to happen. They tend to interpret other’s behaviour towards them negatively, rather acknowledging a positive alternative. Some students with anxiety can be overly sensitive and will interpret general comments personally, particularly if they are negative. Each person with anxiety will find different things easy or challenging.

Students with a diagnosed anxiety disorder will find support from the Health Centre and the Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO); students feeling more generally anxious can seek support from the wider welfare team in Support & Advisory Services.

Others. They often worry about various aspects of social occasions which can prevent them from enjoying themselves.
that coming to university might entail. We are used to the ‘cultural’ environment of our home community. Within this there are all sorts of signs or cues with which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life - things like words, gestures, facial expressions and customs.

Coming to university inevitably means that a lot of the familiar cues and ties are missing. The student might even experience subtle or overt prejudice based on accent, dress, religion or ethnicity. All of these factors can result in ‘culture shock’ - where it feels as if all your familiar props have been knocked away from you, and you have to try to deal with daily situations without the familiar cues and signs that can usually guide your decisions and choices. This is very likely to give rise to lots of uncomfortable feelings, such as frustration and anxiety.

It can be useful to recognise that there are several ‘stages’ of feeling associated with culture shock:

- The ‘honeymoon’ period, when students feel excited about the new experience
- The ‘disintegration’ period is likely to come when students start to feel disoriented
- In the ‘reintegration’ period students may start to feel hostile towards the new place and culture and recognise all the negative things
- The ‘autonomy’ stage is when students start to feel more at home and have become more practised at asserting yourself within their own and the new culture

Different people will experience this process in different ways; not everyone will

Departments vary as to the amount of evidence they require – we are entitled to ask for evidence of bereavement if we wish.

Quite complex issues can arise when a student suffers a very major bereavement – say the loss of a single parent or both parents – and so becomes sole carer for younger siblings etc. Complications can also arise if the grieving period becomes very extended as this may indicate the student has developed depression or even Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Departments therefore should not automatically offer extenuation year on year but rather should refer students for specialist help if the grieving period lengthens.

The Chaplaincy and faith support and the Student Counselling teams are able to provide practical and emotional support to students to have experienced loss and will help them to manage their grief.

Student Counselling
E: counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443128
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/counselling

Chaplaincy & Faith Support
E: chaplaincy@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443070
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/campuslife/faithsupport.aspx

Culture shock and adjustment
The concept of ‘culture shock’ is most relevant to international students, coming to live in the UK from a different country or culture. However, UK students may need to be aware of the ‘cultural adjustment’
Student issues continued

go through every stage; some will switch between stages or experience aspects of some or all of them at once. Everyone coming into a new environment can suffer from culture shock to some extent. If any of your students are displaying any symptoms which indicate culture shock, please refer them to the Student Counselling service or seek advice from the International Student Support office.

Depression
A high proportion of the population will suffer from depression at some time in their lives. If people are able to learn to recognise their own particular set of symptoms, and acquaint themselves with the coping mechanisms for trying to deal with them, often they can learn how to manage their depression. It is important not to make people feel they are weak or inadequate because they are depressed. Everyone’s experience of depression is different, and there is a wide variety of symptoms which are listed below. Depression spans a spectrum. At one end people can struggle on leading a more or less normal life, but feeling awful; at the other end depression may be life-threatening and people may feel suicidal. Many people feel down occasionally, or go through bad patches, but have areas in their lives that make them feel good, and like things about themselves. For some people though, life is more of a struggle. They feel bad about themselves and their lives in most ways. At times they feel complete despair and are probably depressed.

Symptoms
- Disliking or even hating yourself or people in general
Severe depression is when a person cannot function normally for example not going to lectures, not eating or getting out of bed or if someone is actively considering suicide. For severe depression students should be referred for professional help through the medical services. A GP may refer them to an appropriate service for help or may offer medication in the form of anti-depressants. Medication does not necessarily take away the cause of depression but may give the patient enough of a lift to enable them to take actions to deal with the depression in other ways.

Suggestions for students on managing moderate depression:
- They should keep as occupied as possible with things that really interest them
- Get physical – play sport, jog, dance – or do something which makes them laugh
- Look after themselves physically; eat healthily and avoid drugs and excess alcohol.
- Pay attention to their appearance to make them feel good
- Treat themselves from time to time
- Try to make their living environment as pleasant and comfortable as possible
- Encourage them to ask for help; others are usually very willing to listen
- Don’t hold feelings in; cry and get angry if they need to
- Practise challenging some of their negative ideas – especially about themselves. Get them to ask themselves “are you really a worse person or are you just judging yourself too harshly?”

Harassment and bullying
Our Code of Practice on Personal Harassment for students confirms our commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of the individual and acknowledges that personal harassment can be detrimental to the working, learning and social experiences of students. As a College we prohibit abusive behaviour by students towards other students of staff and this includes the use of social media. In recognition of the growing number of reports of online harassment the Disability & Dyslexia Services (ESO) have prepared guidelines on the use of social media.

Harassment reports are treated seriously and have the potential to lead to disciplinary action which can at the highest level lead to a review of a student’s registration at the
Student issues continued

university. However we have a preference that wherever possible harassment complaints are resolved at an early stage and to not require formal proceedings as we believe these issues often arise because of impulsive actions or misunderstandings. Within an informal setting we aim to provide people the opportunity to explore possible misunderstandings, to apologise where appropriate and to allow them to review how they would act differently in the future. Where this informal approach has not proved effective or where the serious is too serious for consideration under this process consideration will be given to treat this issue as a possible breach of College Regulations.

Serious reports of harassment – which may constitute a crime – are encouraged to be reported and discussed with Surrey Police which can be done with the support of the wellbeing team.

E: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443394
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/wellbeing/studentharassment.aspx
royalholloway.ac.uk/iquad/collegepolicies/documents/pdf/equalopportunities/harassment.pdf

Questioning Gender and Transitioning

The gender binary is the idea there are only two genders, men and women. In fact, many individuals identify as gender neutral (a gender identity that is neither man or woman) or even genderqueer; an umbrella term that covers gender identity and expression that doesn’t conform to the man / woman dichotomy. Students at university sometimes question their gender, and can even transition to change their gender presentation. It is important that we take their identity seriously and trust their definitions of identity, whether that is their name or gender pronouns.

Advice:

• Use their preferred name, label and pronouns. If you’re not sure use the gender neutral they / them / their or ask them very politely and in private which pronouns they prefer.
• Don’t comment on their gender presentation. Don’t ask about their gender history or body.
• Don’t ‘out’ anyone without their permission.
• Use all inclusive language like ‘all genders’ instead of ‘both’.
Safety & crime prevention

Students can often be very relaxed about personal safety and crime prevention and leave themselves open to risk. While Surrey is one of the safest counties in the country and Runnymede a safe borough we make considerable efforts therefore to remind people to minimise risk to themselves and others and help prevent crime taking place on or near campus. Nonetheless crime can happen and we provide support and advice for students who have been the victim of crime and can help them to report matters to Surrey Police with whom we have an excellent working relationship.

We also have a Campus Watch scheme in operation on campus and encourage the campus community to look out for each other and report any suspicious circumstances or situations to College Security or Surrey Police. We also hold regular safety events to remind students of personal safety and crime prevention messages.

We work with the Police on the Prevent strategy which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism both domestically and internationally. This can include extreme right wing views, violent religious ideology or single issue extremism such as animal rights and Prevent seeks to prevent people from using or promoting violent activity as a means of promoting such views. We have a legally defined role to secure freedom of speech and to promote academic freedom but as an institution we also have a role to play in monitoring resilience towards the threats posed by extremism and ask people to remain alert to changes in students or vulnerabilities which may suggest they may be at risk of radicalisation. Please contact the Community & Wellbeing team if you wish to discuss this further.

Settling in, fitting in at university and homesickness

It is sometimes easy to forget what a major transition the move to university can be for students. For many it will be the first time they have lived on their own and been independent, for others it will mean a move many miles away from their family and friends and their ‘safety net’. It is estimated up to 70% of students will experience some level of homesickness so it is important to ensure students who feel this way know they are not the only one feeling unsettled or scared and that they shouldn’t panic but allow themselves to settle in to accommodation, lectures and study, and to make new friends. University life and moving onto campus, from other parts of the UK or abroad, is a transition period which is managed differently by individuals. The transition period when
beginning university can cause an inner conflict for students as they often arrive with a certain expectation of how much fun will be had without considering that the arrival itself may be different to what they were expecting and they may feel lost, upset and anxious. There can be a low after the initial buzz and excitement of arriving, often with the realisation that this is a permanent life change. Many students hide their homesickness and do not realise that others are feeling the same way.

Homesickness tends to disappear after a few weeks for some they will experience severe or prolonged feelings of low mood, stress and generally low wellbeing. Students experiencing homesickness may appear tearful, anxious and have difficulties with sleeping and eating. Students may be calling home regularly and expressing a wish to leave university. Those living closer to home may be returning home frequently mid-week and at the weekends which could be impacting on their social activities at university. Homesickness can be exacerbated by friendship problems or not feeling like they ‘fit in’. Students may feel they have not connected well with the people they are living with or they may feel left out of tightly-knit friendship groups which have formed in the first week.

Ideas to help students settle

- Encourage them to make an effort to get to know flatmates and others on the course – by meeting up for coffee, cooking, eating or studying together or going out for exercise
- Suggest they create a comfortable environment in their room by making it homely and unique to them – for example posters, photos, cushions
- Talk to them about planning a weekly routine to keep busy and active – long periods worrying about feeling homesickness are not helpful
- Tell them not to worry if others instantly gel with each other and they’re feeling left out. Friendships form at different rates and once people are relaxed and settled in people find their natural friendship groups
- We recommend students get involved with all that Royal Holloway has to offer – sports clubs, societies, volunteering. This will help keep them busy and provide another chance to meet like-minded people in different situations
- Aim not to suggest the visit home too quickly after arriving as this is likely to add to feelings of missing home. A helpful suggestion could be for family and friends to visit the student instead of them returning home. Text, Skype or email to family will vary how they keep in touch and keep things fresh
- Suggest they visit the Student Life team to see what events and trips they can get involved in. They can also link students up with a Peer Guide.
Advice for supporting students with homesickness:

- Treat the student(s) with understanding and be sympathetic to their feelings

- Reassure them that what they are feeling will is a natural response to transition and change and will pass. Although it may not seem like it remind them that many other students are also feeling the same way

- Encourage the student to speak to somebody, whether this be a friend or one of the university counsellors. It may be worth trying to arrange for them to meet other students who are feeling the same way as having somebody to talk to can be a great help in reducing these feelings

- Advise students to think about how often they want to call or visit home and to find the right balance for them

- Try to prevent them from making a quick decision to leave Royal Holloway

- Advise them to keep busy and establish a good weekly routine with academic and social activities

- If any academic issues arise refer the student to their peer guide

Student Counselling
E: counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443128
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/counselling
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/counselling/tipsforwelcomeweek.aspx

Wellbeing
E: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443394
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/wellbeing/wellbeinghome.aspx
Stress
The feeling of being unable to cope with the accumulation of real or perceived pressure a person is experiencing can be common amongst students although some people are more susceptible to it than others. As with anxiety, a small amount of short term stress can help to increase students’ productivity, particularly in performance demanding situations like exams. Stress in the long term, however, can decrease student wellbeing and lead to exhaustion and illness. The most common worries for students tend to be:

- Financial worries
- Moving away from home & settling somewhere new
- Workload & study pressure
- Housing issues
- Family issues
- Relationships

If you are concerned a student is stressed or placing too much pressure on themselves:

- Reassure them & help them to prioritise their workload
- Support them with time management skills, allowing time for leisure and study
- Encourage the student to make time for relaxation
- Advise them to reduce energy drinks, alcohol, caffeinated drinks & smoking
- Recommend regular exercise & healthy eating
- Refer them to the welfare services for further support & advice

Stress can be managed with suitable lifestyle changes and emotional support. In some cases prolonged stress can develop into more psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety. It is important to be aware of any changes in a student’s behaviour that may indicate they are under some form of stress. We have a range of welfare services available to support students and are happy to meet any student to discuss how we can help them.

E: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
T: 01784 443394
W: royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/wellbeing/wellbeinghome.aspx
Useful links

Welfare
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/home.aspx

Emergency advice
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/emergencies.aspx

Support publications
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/publications.aspx

Counselling service: advice for staff
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/counselling/departmentsandstaff.aspx

Counselling service: common student problems
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/counselling/commonproblems.aspx

Disability & Dyslexia Services: advice for staff
royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/disabledstudents/adviceforstaff.aspx

SU Advice & Support Centre
su.rhul.ac.uk/advice

Data Protection

Parental contact
royalholloway.ac.uk/iquad/collegepolicies/documents/pdf/academic/parentalcontact.pdf

Guidelines on Personal Relationships between Staff, Students and Others

Death of a student protocol
royalholloway.ac.uk/iquad/collegepolicies/documents/pdf/academic/parentalcontact.pdf

Produced by Support & Advisory Services with input from the Students’ Union and the Student Life team