

SUPPORTING DISTRESSED STUDENTS

April 2016

Supporting Wellbeing for Academic Success



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

Many people experience emotional and psychological difficulties at some point in their lives. Usually these can be resolved by talking them through with family and friends. Sometimes professional help is needed. Most students will cope well with the stresses of academic life given reasonable support from their friends, family and academic departments. Sometimes they need more than this. If you feel you need to, or are requested to, give a student extra assistance, it is important to help within the boundaries of what you feel competent to do.

Helping Distressed Students: *A guide for staff*

This guide has been produced to:

- Help you to recognise when a student may be in difficulty
- Provide advice to help you respond/refer appropriately and effectively
- Remind you of the sources of support within the University
- Raise awareness of issues relating to student mental health

What you can do

- Listen
- Give the student time to talk
- Understand the situation from his or her point of view
- Be sympathetic and not dismissive
- Help the student feel contained
- Make appropriate referrals

What you can't do

- Solve all the student's problems
- Take responsibility for his or her emotional state or actions

The health and wellbeing of all members of the University is everyone's concern.

This guide gives you advice on dealing with both crises and more everyday situations. It is important to be prepared for emergencies, but you should be aware they occur very rarely and that expert help is available.

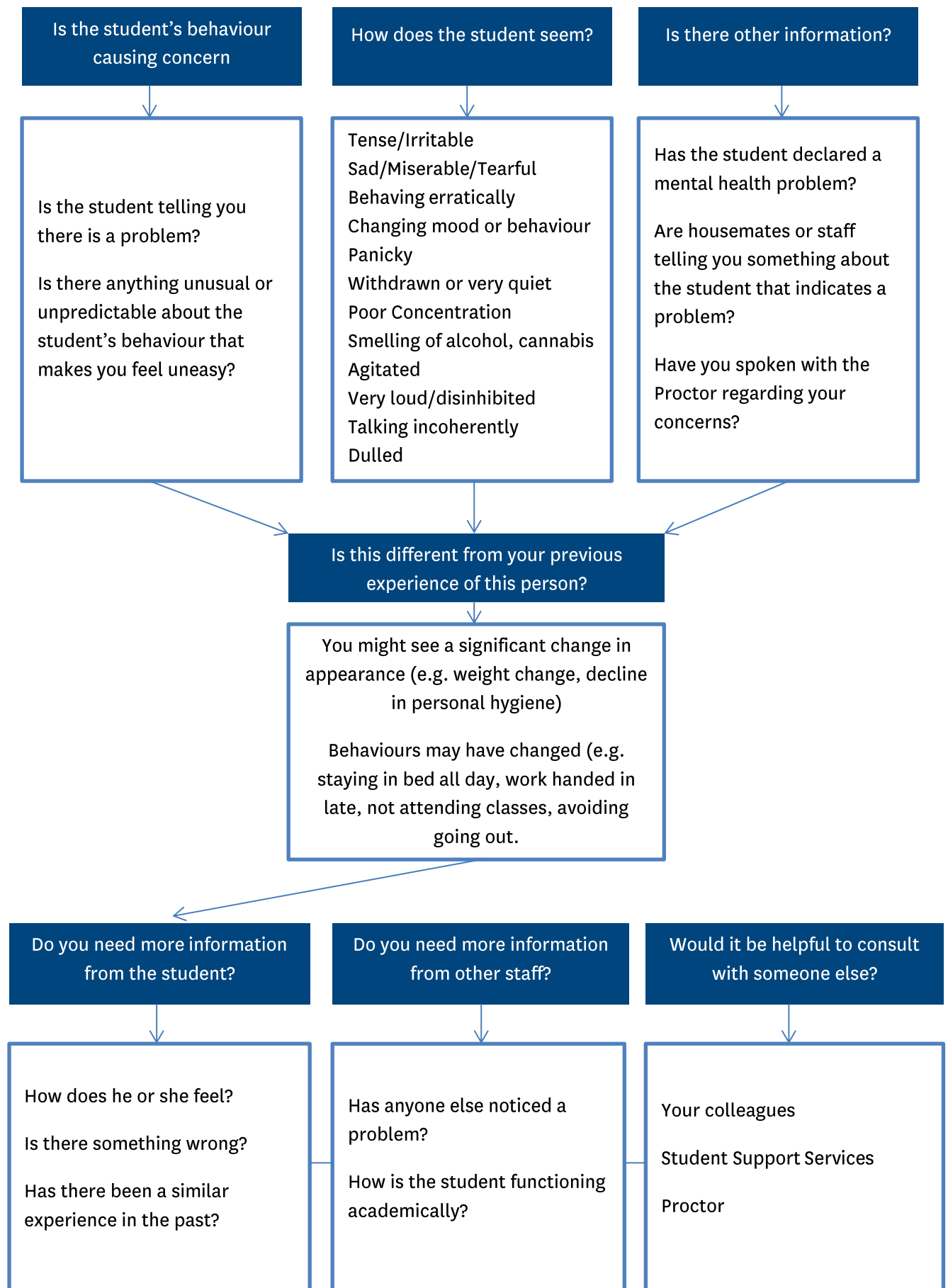
If you are concerned that a student may be a risk to others or to the faculty and learning environment contact the Proctor.

Confidentiality

- Do not disclose personal information about students to anyone outside the University, including parents, without the student's explicit consent.
- If parents wish to contact a student, you can offer to forward a communication or tell the student they have been in touch.
- Treat personal information about students with discretion.
- Do not promise absolute confidentiality and advise the student that you may have to consult a colleague.
- UHSC offers a confidential consultation service to all staff who may wish to discuss their concerns about a student in difficulty.

How do you know there is a problem?

Trusting your own judgement – check the following

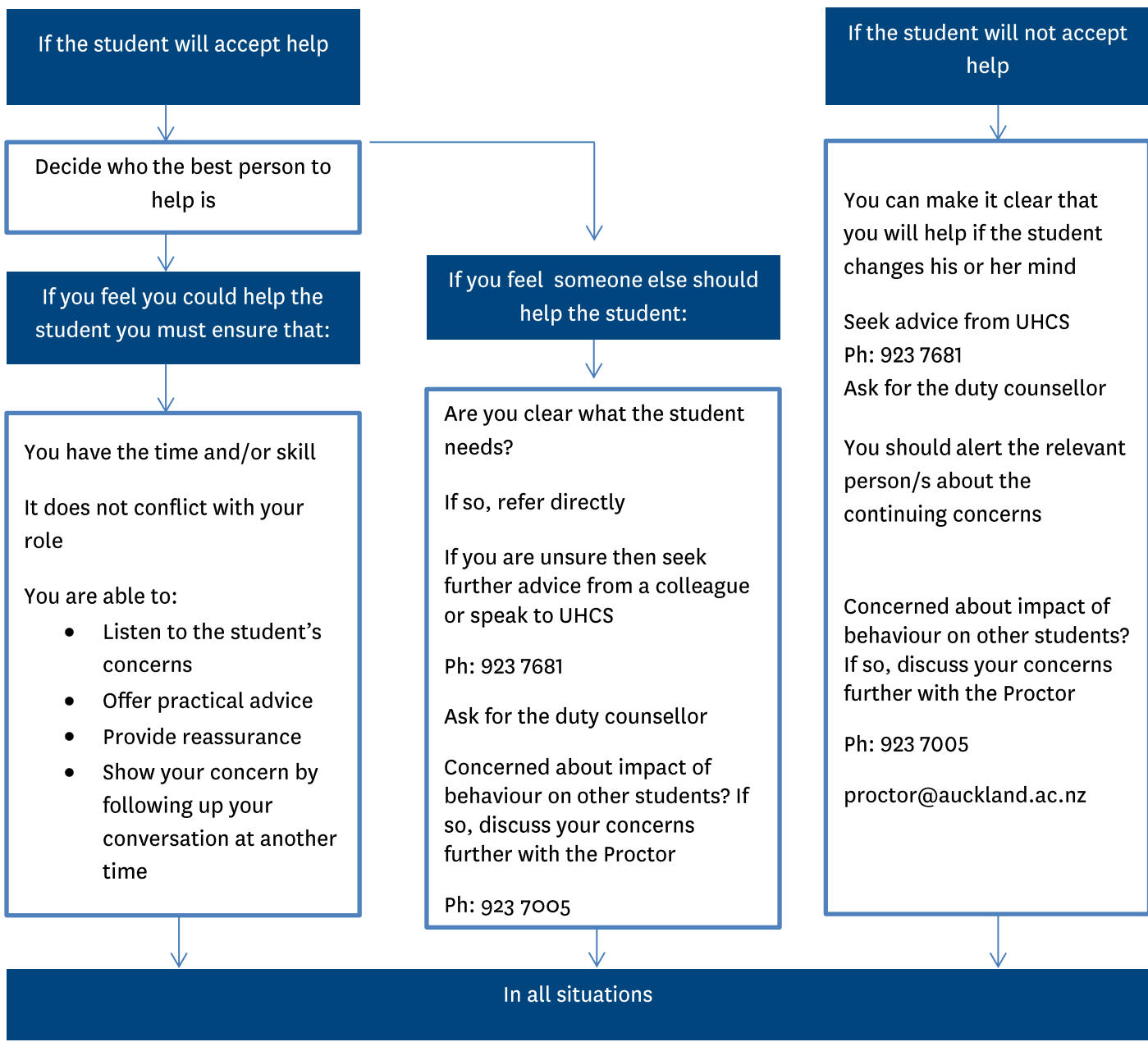


What you should do if the situation does NOT require immediate action

It is NOT urgent if:

There is no immediate risk to student, or others, although the student may be:

- Depressed, anxious, generally stressed
- Homesick, lonely and isolated
- Having problems with relationships
- Suffering from low-self esteem
- Bereaved
- Having unexplained study or money problems



- Make sure that you debrief by talking the situation through with an appropriate colleague
- If appropriate make a record of the conversation.
- Follow up and ensure that the student is still managing at nearest opportunity

What you should do if the situation IS urgent

It is urgent if:

You believe the student may be at risk of harm to him or herself, or others.

You are concerned for one or more of the following reasons. The student:

- May be at risk of serious self-harm
- Is violent or threatening violence to people or property – **Call the Police on 111**
- Has completely stopped functioning
- Seems very disorientated and out of touch with reality
- Is behaving out of character
- Expresses suicidal thoughts

If the student will accept help

In office hours

Refer the student directly to their GP or contact UHCS, Ph. 923 7681 and ask for the Duty Counsellor.

Inform the receptionist of your role and let them know if it is for urgent advice or appointment.

See website for [UHCS](#)

Inform the appropriate person
e.g. Inform Area Officer/Residential Manager

Out of Hours

Mental Health Crisis Line

0800 800 717

This is 24/7 and they will call you back once you inform them of your location.

**If in immediate danger (you or the student)
Police 111 - Emergency**

If the student will not accept help

In office hours

Contact the Student's GP, or, if unknown, UHCS will offer advice.

Ph: 923 7681 and ask for the Duty Counsellor

Or call the emergency services 111, or Security 85000.

UHCS will offer advice.

Out of hours

Mental Health Crisis Line

0800 800 717

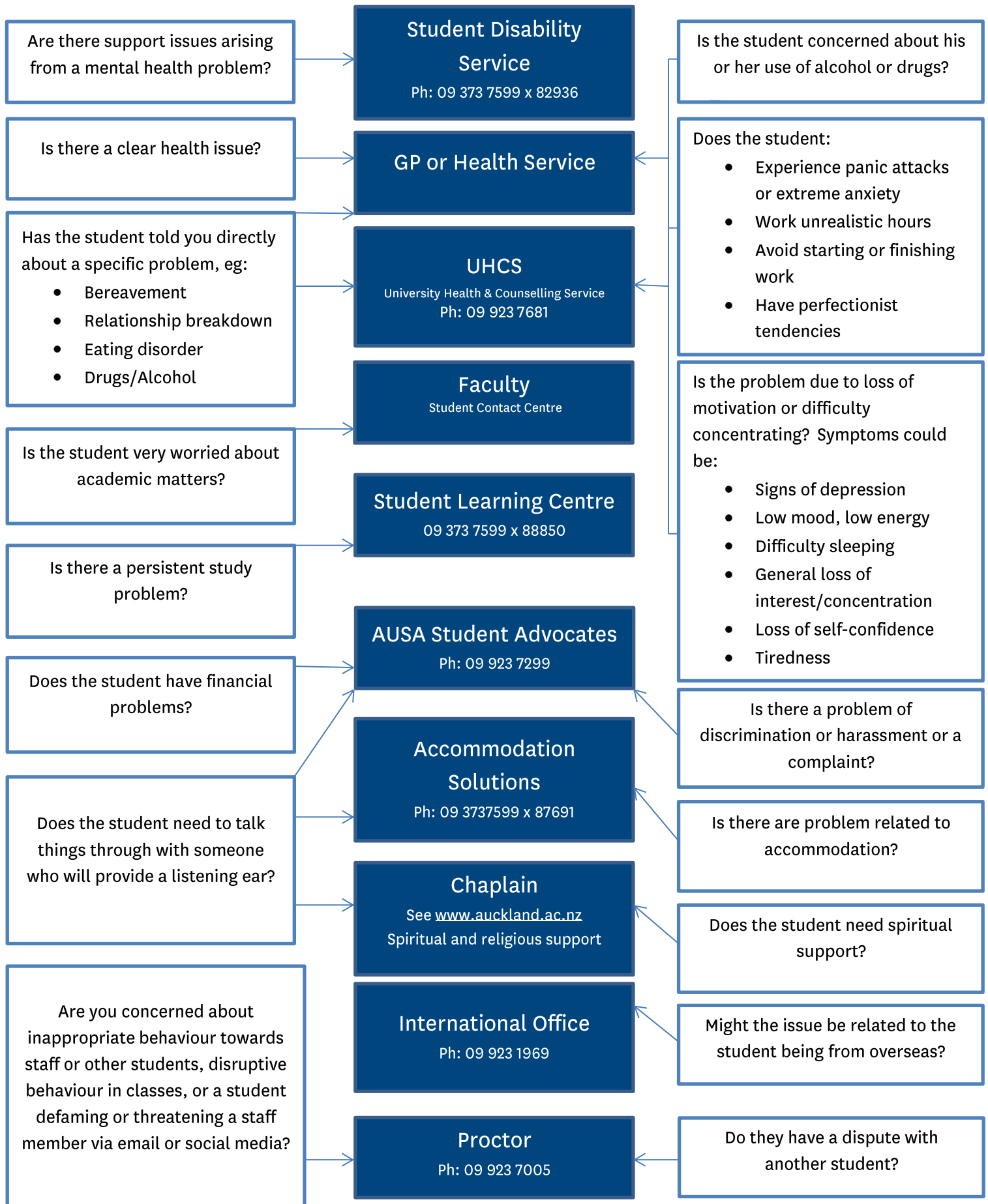
This is 24/7 and they will call you back once you inform them of your location.

**If in immediate danger (you or the student)
Police 111 - Emergency**

In all situations

- Try to stay calm
- Engage with the student if possible, but put safety first
- Prioritise you own safety and that of others at the scene
- Whenever possible, make sure that you have back-up available
- Make sure that you debrief by talking the situation through with a colleague or UHCS
- If appropriate keep a written record

What sort of support does the student need?



Supporting Student Wellbeing

See Something

Say Something

Do Something

On completion of this two hour workshop you will:

- Feel confident in identifying students who may require more support
 - Know support systems available to students and referral paths
 - Have a broader understanding of working with students to ensure that they reach their full academic potential through supporting long term wellbeing.
 - Be able to respond appropriately to students in distress.
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This training is appropriate for any staff who have student contact - or in a position where they may be required to respond to a student in distress.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROMOTING
STUDENT WELLBEING
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