GSAS CRIMSON FOLDER

Guidance and resources to assist GSAS students in distress
GSAS Crimson Folder

WHAT IS THE GSAS CRIMSON FOLDER?
GSAS students often encounter challenges during graduate school and may not recognize that they need help. As an administrator, faculty, or staff member, you are in a prime position to guide GSAS students in distress to support services. The GSAS Crimson Folder is designed to help you prepare to support students by learning how to recognize signs of distress, respond to a student’s needs with attentiveness and empathy, refer the student to others who may be best equipped to help, and by becoming familiar with resources.

STUDENT PRIVACY, FERPA, AND CONFIDENTIALITY
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student in connection with a health and safety emergency. Observations of a student’s conduct or statements made by a student are not protected by FERPA. Consideration for student privacy should always be given before information is shared. When communicating with a student, it is important to use the language “private and discrete” rather than “confidential,” as you may need to share information with those listed in this document.
Any one of the following indicators alone does not necessarily suggest the student is experiencing distress. However, together they may indicate the student needs or may be asking for help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC</th>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sudden decline in quality of work</td>
<td>• Self-disclosure of family problems, interpersonal conflict, or personal losses such as a death of a family member, or the break-up of a relationship</td>
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<td>• Repeated absences</td>
<td>• Self-disclosure of financial difficulties, assault, discrimination, or legal concerns</td>
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<td>• Keeping an unusual schedule in lab</td>
<td>• Changes in relationship with food</td>
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<td>• Disorganized performance</td>
<td>• Unusual or disproportionate emotional response to events</td>
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<td>• Disruptive in class or meetings</td>
<td>• Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions</td>
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<td>• Multiple requests for extensions, incompletes, or special considerations</td>
<td>• Verbal abuse like taunting, badgering, or intimidation</td>
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<td>• Concerns about academic integrity</td>
<td>• Delusions and paranoia</td>
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<td>• Does not respond to repeated requests for contact or meetings</td>
<td>• Expression of concern about the student by peers</td>
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<td>• Overly demanding of faculty or staff’s time and attention</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bizarre content in writings or speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consistently seeking personal rather than professional advice</td>
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<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>SAFETY</th>
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<td>• Marked changes in physical appearance (e.g., grooming or hygiene deterioration, notable changes in weight)</td>
<td>• Verbal, written, or implied reference to suicide, homicide, assault, or self-harm</td>
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<td>• Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance</td>
<td>• Unprovoked anger or hostility</td>
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<td>• Intoxication, frequent hangovers, or smelling of alcohol</td>
<td>• Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, rage, despair, violence, or self-injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Presenting as disorientated or “out of it”</td>
<td>• Physical violence like shoving, grabbing, assaulting, or use of a weapon</td>
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<td>• Garbled, off-topic, disconnected, or slurred speech</td>
<td>• Stalking or harassing</td>
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<td>• Rapid, pressured speech or manic behavior</td>
<td>• Communicating threats or disturbing comments in person or via email, text, or phone call</td>
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<td>• Behavior is out of context or bizarre</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Depressed or lethargic mood or functioning</td>
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Responding to students in distress can feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable. It is important to engage the student and relay your concerns. Be mindful of the student’s background, identity, and culture, as well as your own. Listen patiently, withhold judgement, and allow for silences if the student is slow to respond. The tips below and questions outlined on the next page can help guide a difficult conversation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STAY SAFE</strong></th>
<th>If there is imminent danger to you, the student, or someone else, call HUPD or 911.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAKE YOUR TIME</strong></td>
<td>Actively listen to the student’s concerns and consider how you might be able to help. Choose an appropriate place or situation for having this conversation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STAY CALM</strong></td>
<td>Take a few deep breaths to calm yourself. Use a calm voice when talking and asking questions.</td>
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<td><strong>USE ACTIVE LISTENING</strong></td>
<td>Make eye contact and give your full attention. Restate what the student says to make sure you understand what is causing the distress.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASK DIRECT QUESTIONS</strong></td>
<td>Don’t be afraid to directly ask the student if they are having thoughts of harming themselves or others. By asking questions you are not instilling the thought.</td>
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Respond Tips

**SAY WHAT YOU SEE.** Be direct. Let the student know that you’ve noticed a change and you want to talk.

“Hi ___. I just wanted to check in. I’ve noticed ___ and wanted to see if you wanted to talk about it.” • “I’ve noticed ___ and I want you to know that I am here to support you.”

**HEAR THEM OUT.** Be there to listen and be fully present. As an active listener, be curious and ask appropriate follow-up questions.

“Wow, I’d like to hear more about that.” • “I’m sorry, that seems like a difficult situation to be in. What is that like for you?” • “That sounds really hard, how is that affecting you?”

**KNOW YOUR ROLE.** Set clear boundaries and connect students to those who can meet their needs. You are the bridge. Remember you are not a confidential resource but honor their privacy as best as possible.

“I’m glad you felt comfortable to share that with me.” • “If it’s alright with you, I’d like to connect you with resources such as CAMHS or AEO who may be helpful to you.” • “I may need to share information with the GSAS Office of Student Services in order to figure out how best to help you/get you the resources that would be helpful.”

**CONNECT TO HELP.** Determine whether the student needs immediate support and refer them to the appropriate resources. Recognize that it may take time for a student to build trust and accept help. Follow-up with them, if welcomed.

“Thank you for being so open with me. I want to be sure that you can access the resources you need to get through this challenging situation.” • “It’s okay to say "I am not sure, but there are people at Harvard who can help.” • “I am not sure, let me find out.” • “How are you doing since we last spoke? Was that resource helpful?”
Identify what the GSAS student needs

Listen to the student to determine their immediate needs. Review the options below to guide the student to the appropriate resource.

The GSAS student’s conduct is clearly reckless, dangerous, disorderly, or threatening of immediate harm to self or others in the community.

The GSAS student shows signs of distress, but it is not clear how serious it is. I feel uneasy and very concerned about the student.

I am not concerned for anyone’s immediate safety, but the GSAS student is having significant academic or personal issues and could use some support.

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**REACT**

Call HUPD 617-495-1212 or 911

Any report made to HUPD involving a GSAS student will be brought to the attention of GSAS’s Office of Student Services.

**CONSULT**

During Business Hours: Contact GSAS Student Services 617-495-5005 to strategize and triage student support.

After Hours: Contact CAMHS Cares 617-495-2042 to connect the student to mental health support.

**REFER**

Review the resources listed on the following page and offer to connect the student to the office that will best support them.

If you are unsure, refer the student to meet with GSAS Office of Student Services.
Wellness Checks

A wellness check is a consultative process that exemplifies the partnership between the GSAS Office of Student Services and faculty and staff in responding to student needs. If you have not heard from a student for some time and you or others are concerned about their safety or well-being, it may be necessary to initiate a wellness check. This process typically begins with contacting the student’s emergency contact and may involve enlisting the assistance of HUPD or local police.

Once you recognize that it has been some time since you have heard from the student, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it typical that the student would not reply to emails for some time?
- When was the last time you heard from or physically saw the student?
- Does the student have a history of being out of contact?
- Are there other community members (peers, colleagues, etc.) that might be in touch with the student?
- Have others expressed concern about the student?
- What outreach have you tried already—emails, calls, leaving notes, using department means (Slack, messaging app, etc.)? Have you tried multiple means to connect?
- Are there any mental or physical health concerns that you are aware of?
- Does the student live alone or with others?

Initial outreach to the student may come from a member of the department or GSAS. If a student does not respond to faculty or departmental outreach, it may be necessary to consult with GSAS Office of Student Services for support and to initiate a wellness check.

Contact GSAS Office of Student Services

Departmental staff, faculty, or other community members may email Director of Student Services Danielle Farrell at farrell@fas.harvard.edu or call the Office of Student Services at 617-495-5005 to request a wellness check for a GSAS student. The Office of Student Services is available to assist a faculty or staff member to send a message that expresses the urgency and initiates the wellness check process.
EMERGENCY
- Medical or Public Safety Emergency: 911
- Harvard University Police: 617-495-1212
- Harvard University Police Longwood: 617-432-1212
- University Health Services Urgent Care: 617-495-5711

Refer to your department’s internal emergency protocol

COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
- CAMHS Cares Line: 617-495-2042
  24-hour access line that allows students to speak with a licensed counselor

SUPPORT FOR FACULTY & STAFF
- HUHS Behavioral Health: 617-495-2323
  Clinical care for Harvard employees
- Employee Assistance Program
  Offers free, confidential help for Harvard employees
- Office of Faculty Affairs
- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
  Support for faculty, research scholars, postdocs, fellows, and RAs in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

GSAS
- Office of Student Services: 617-495-5005
  Danielle Farrell, Director, farrell@fas.harvard.edu
  Primary resource for general GSAS student support
- Office of Student Affairs: 617-495-1814
  Academic policy clarification and issues regarding students’ academic status, progress, and conduct
- Office of Diversity and Minority Affairs: 617-495-5315
  Supports diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts
- Office of Financial Aid
  Guidance regarding financial obligations and support
- Title IX Resource Coordinators
  Seth Avakian, avakian@fas.harvard.edu
  Danielle Farrell, farrell@fas.harvard.edu
  Address issues of sexual and gender-based harassment
- The Advising Project
  Initiative focused on improving the advising experience
- Engage
  Centralized resource for GSAS student groups and social events
- Student Resources
  Comprehensive collection of offices, initiatives, groups, and programs that serve GSAS students

UNIVERSITY
- Academic Resource Center
  Coaching and workshops focused on academic progress
- Accessible Education Office
  Academic accommodations for students with disabilities
- Harvard International Office
  Support for international students and scholars
- Global Support Services
  Resources for Harvard students traveling and living abroad
- Office for Gender Equity
  Counseling, reporting, and policy resources to address issues of sexual harassment and misconduct
- LGBTQ+ Supports
  Resources and information that serve LGBTQ+ individuals
- Harvard Office for Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging
  Coordinates equity and access efforts across Harvard
- HUHS Center for Wellness and Health Promotion
  Workshops, services, and classes centered on wellbeing
- Harvard Chaplains
  Supports religious, spiritual, and moral engagement
- HU Ombuds Office
  Assists in managing issues affecting work or academics

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-8255
- Samaritans Suicide Prevention Hotline: 877-870-4673
- SafeLink Domestic/Dating Violence Hotline: 877-785-2020
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center: 800-841-8371
- Boston Food Access: 617-635-3717
- MA Confidential Referral Helpline: 211
- MA Mental Health Resources: 617-580-8541
- MA Department of Mental Health