

The University's Statement on 'Duty of Care'

Statement on Durham University's Duty of Care to students and staff

It is important that the University sets out the extent, and limits, of its duty of care in relation to health and well-being as this is an area of increasing challenge in relation to both students and staff. The University has a duty of care to our staff and students, which is enshrined in Health and Safety, Equality and Employment Legislation.

Universities are not expected to develop or deliver bespoke physical health or mental health treatment services as they are not statutory health bodies. We provide support services to our students and employees that are designed to enable their successful study, scholarly pursuits or success in their employed roles. We are clear we must provide services to our community that we have outlined in our prospectus, student or staff contracts and marketing and other relevant information.

Our duty of care for students is to provide teaching along with learning support and pastoral support to the standard of the reasonably competent higher education institution and to act reasonably in our aim of protecting the health, safety and welfare of our students.

Our Professional Support Services, Departments and Colleges and the staff within our community providing pastoral or line manager support should not go beyond providing appropriate support. This means the University being clear on boundaries, ensuring our colleagues are being suitably supported themselves and being helped to manage any psychological distress. This is particularly important for distress that may result from frontline work with students with mental illness, victims of sexual assault, students or colleagues who self-harm and any other significant and distressing challenges or a combination of complex circumstances.