

Dear Faculty and Teaching Staff.

Here are two statements about **mental health and accessibility to health and mental health services** on campus that you may want to add to your course syllabus. Thanks to Margie MacKinnon and Ivan Drouin, at the StFX Health and Counselling Center, for reviewing these documents.

Statement 1:

Being mentally healthy does not mean being "happy all the time" but rather, it is having the ability to cope with problems as they arise, and enjoying and finding fulfillment in numerous and various aspects of life. Every single person experiences periods when they have no distress, as well as times when they experience mild or moderate mental distress. Mental health problems are real and we need to take them seriously. It is important to recognize that even though students (new and experienced alike) come to university with many strengths, at university they may not have access to all of the supports that they usually enjoy at home, and some of the coping strategies they have developed while living at home may no longer be as effective. As a result, many students experience some challenges adjusting to university life and they recognize that they need to learn new strategies to overcome these new challenges.

If you find yourself in distress, I can provide immediate support and guidance in a safe environment. I can comfortably have a conversation about mental health related issues, and can provide you with information about professional and other supports. The Health and Counselling Centre is also a welcoming environment for all StFX students, with medical and mental health professionals who are there to support student wellness, across all areas of health, including mental health. The Health and Counselling Centre is located in Bloomfield 305 (the Students' Union Building), around the corner from the Info Desk and is open Monday through Friday; students can either stop by or call (902-867-2263) to make a private appointment with the Intake Nurse. No issue is too big or too small to ask for help with.

Statement 2:

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry and anxiety, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be related to your course work; if so and if the student feels comfortable to do so, please speak to the instructor. However, problems with interpersonal relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. StFX offers confidential mental health services for students seeking support through the Health and Counselling Centre on campus (305 Bloomfield). In addition, a suite of online and phone-based mental health supports is available at no cost to Nova Scotia post-secondary students, through Healthy Minds NS (<https://healthymindsns.ca/>). Students seeking support following an experience of sexual violence are encouraged to contact our Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Advocate at hblackbu@stfx.ca.

The instructor may express the availability of support services, if psychological distress is suspected or observed. The intention of this conversation is not to gain knowledge about the source of the distress but rather to make the student(s) aware of all available services. Taking advantage of these services may provide significant help to the student's academic and personal well-being.

All faculty and staff members, except those who are listed under Confidential Resources, are legally required to disclose any reports of sexual misconduct/danger of self-harm to the institution, and cannot guarantee confidentiality. If you would like to seek help, or disclose confidentially, you may do so through the offices or people listed above.