

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY



The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

GSAS CRIMSON FOLDER

Guidance and resources to assist GSAS students in distress

RECOGNIZE | RESPOND | REFER | RESOURCE

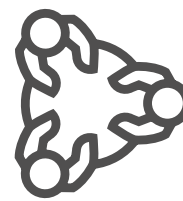
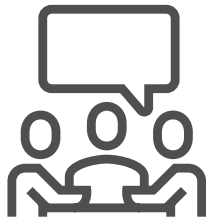
GSAS Crimson Folder

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.



RECOGNIZE

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.

ACADEMIC

- Sudden decline in quality of work
- Repeated absences
- Keeping an unusual schedule in lab
- Disorganized performance
- Disruptive in class or meetings
- Multiple requests for extensions, incompletes, or special considerations
- Concerns about academic integrity
- Does not respond to repeated requests for contact or meetings
- Overly demanding of faculty or staff's time and attention
- Bizarre content in writings or speech
- Consistently seeking personal rather than professional advice

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- 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
- Self-disclosure of financial difficulties, assault, discrimination, or legal concerns
- Changes in relationship with food
- Unusual or disproportionate emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions
- Verbal abuse like taunting, badgering, or intimidation
- Delusions and paranoia
- Expression of concern about the student by peers

PHYSICAL

- Marked changes in physical appearance (e.g., grooming or hygiene deterioration, notable changes in weight)
- Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, frequent hangovers, or smelling of alcohol
- Presenting as disorientated or "out of it"
- Garbled, off-topic, disconnected, or slurred speech
- Rapid, pressured speech or manic behavior
- Behavior is out of context or bizarre
- Depressed or lethargic mood or functioning

SAFETY

- Verbal, written, or implied reference to suicide, homicide, assault, or self-harm
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, rage, despair, violence, or self-injury
- Physical violence like shoving, grabbing, assaulting, or use of a weapon
- Stalking or harassing
- Communicating threats or disturbing comments in person or via email, text, or phone call



RESPOND

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 judgment, 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.

STAY SAFE

If there is imminent danger to you, the student, or someone else, call HUPD or 911.

TAKE YOUR TIME

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.

STAY CALM

Take a few deep breaths to calm yourself. Use a calm voice when talking and asking questions.

USE ACTIVE LISTENING

Make eye contact and give your full attention. Restate what the student says to make sure you understand what is causing the distress.

ASK DIRECT QUESTIONS

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.



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 CAM-HS 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."

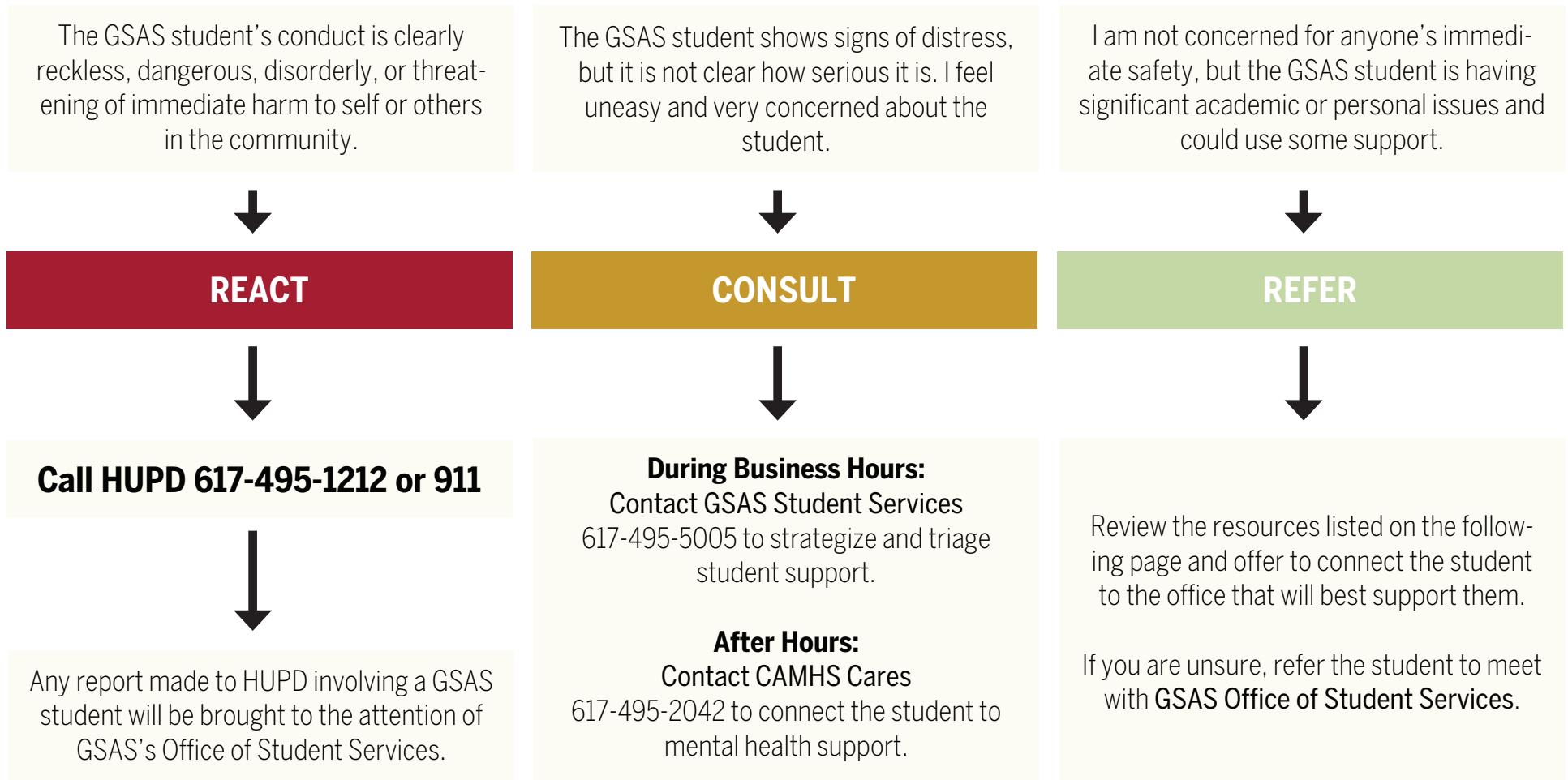
CONNECT TO HELP. Determine whether the student needs immediate support and refer them to the appropriate resources. Recognize that it may take time for a student to build trust and accept help. Follow-up with them, if welcomed.

"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.



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.



RESOURCE

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
<i>Refer to your department's internal emergency protocol</i>	

COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

CAMHS Cares Line	617-495-2042
<i>24-hour access line that allows students to speak with a licensed counselor</i>	

SUPPORT FOR FACULTY & STAFF

HUHS Behavioral Health	617-495-2323
<i>Clinical care for Harvard employees</i>	
Employee Assistance Program	
<i>Offers free, confidential help for Harvard employees</i>	
Office of Faculty Affairs	
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs	
<i>Support for faculty, research scholars, postdocs, fellows, and RAs in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences</i>	

GSAS

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

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

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES



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