SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND THEIR WELLNESS
A RETURN TO CAMPUS GUIDE
Feelings of excitement, stress, and/or hesitation about returning to campus is completely normal. Some have enjoyed working from home while others can’t wait to get their living room back.

We understand that change and transitions can be difficult so it’s important to take care of yourself and your mental health. Take a look at the mental health resources provided by the Healthy Workplace Committee.

Similar to how you may be feeling or have felt over the past year, students may need additional support as they return to campus. We have developed this resource to help you support them during this transition.
HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH THE TRANSITION

1. NORMALIZE THE DIFFICULTY OF CHANGE AND TRANSITIONS
   Some students may be excited to return while others may have feelings of anxiety or challenges with getting back into in-person routines. Both feelings are valid and normal. This can be acknowledged verbally or in course syllabus.

2. MODEL HEALTHY COPING BEHAVIOURS
   Demonstrate good boundaries by sharing your schedule with students – when you are available to meet and/or answer emails.

3. EXPLAIN HOW SERVICES WORK
   Where possible and when needed, explain to students how services work, what options are available to them, and why decisions are being made the way that they are. This can help everyone better understand their situation in circumstances that can feel out of our control.

4. BE FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE
   Stressful times are associated with threats to our safety and students may feel a loss of power and control over their lives. It is extremely helpful to be flexible, adaptable, and provide options and/or accommodations.
There are real consequences from trying to carry on at normal levels of productivity through prolonged periods of stress. This can affect students’ wellbeing, attention span, learning styles, and ability to communicate and plan effectively. You can support students by having empathy, self-awareness, and listening to their needs.

Understand that some students may have experienced more stress and trauma during the pandemic than others. While many of us may have had similar experiences during the past year, do not generalize students’ experiences.

Don’t forget an important lesson from the pandemic. Virtual meetings and activities have provided more opportunities for students who may have difficulty with in-person participation. This may be due to location, schedules, health concerns, or abilities. Be inclusive and try to offer a hybrid approach, where possible.
RESPONDING TO STUDENTS WHO NEED SUPPORT

**RECOGNIZE** THE INDICATORS OF MENTAL DISTRESS
Indicators can be academic, physical, behavioural, and/or emotional.

**RESPOND** TO THE SITUATION
Respond to the student in a way that is appropriate to the situation at hand and the existing relationship you have with the student.

**REFER** TO APPROPRIATE RESOURCES
Explain the limitations of your knowledge and experience. Tell the student that the referral resource has the capacity to assist them in a more appropriate manner.

**TIPS**
- Meet in a private place where you won’t be interrupted. Prioritize physical and emotional safety for you and the student.
- Express your concern in a positive tone and point out specific behaviours that you notice.
- Ask how things are going for the person. Consider what is happening in their life right now rather than what is wrong with them.
- Listen with empathy and without judgment. Encourage them to elaborate.
- Remember, opening up can be difficult and emotional for both you and the person you are speaking with.
- Avoid promising to keep the person’s concerns a secret. If the person expresses something that may indicate a safety risk, you should always contact someone else who can help.
- Ensure you let the person know about the different options to get help.
WHERE TO REFER STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

For urgent concerns during office hours, contact Counselling Services (519-888-4567, ext. 32655) or Health Services (519-888-4096).

The following resources can be reached 24/7:

- Police Services (519-888-4567 ext. 22222)
- Good2Talk (1-866-925-5454)
- Here 24/7 (1-844-437-3247)
- Grand River Hospital (519-749-4300)

For a larger list of resources both on and off-campus please visit the Wellness Resources Database.