

Supporting students to raise concerns during clinical placements:

Guidance for staff

Fostering a culture in which students feel safe, supported and confident to speak up is essential for maintaining high standards of patient safety, educational quality and professional conduct. This guidance outlines how staff should respond to concerns and support students throughout the process where they are raised directly with a member of academic, professional services, or placement staff.

Why raising concerns is important

Encouraging students to raise concerns helps to:

- Promote safe, high-quality patient care
- Support an open, positive and inclusive learning environment
- Enable early identification of risks, poor practice and systemic issues
- Reinforce the professional responsibilities expected by regulatory bodies

All healthcare students and professionals have a duty to speak up when patient safety, dignity or quality of care may be at risk.

Common types of concerns raised by students

Student concerns may relate to a range of issues, including:

- Patient safety
- Bullying, harassment or educational experiences
- Professional behaviour of staff or peers
- Concerns about another student's wellbeing or safeguarding

Concerns may not always fall neatly into a single category, and students may need support to articulate their experiences clearly.

How to respond when a student raises a concern

When a student raises a concern, staff should adopt a calm and supportive approach:

1. Ensure immediate safety

- Ensure that they take urgent local action if there is a risk of harm
- Support them to follow local clinical governance or emergency procedures as required

2. Listen and clarify

- Discuss the concern promptly with the clinical assessor, practice educator, GP tutor or relevant member of the placement team
- Allow the student time to explain their concern fully
- Use open questions to understand:
 1. What happened

2. Who was involved
 3. When and where it occurred
- Avoid dismissing or making premature judgements

3. Ensure appropriate escalation

- Advise students on how and when to escalate concerns appropriately. Other than for minor concerns that can be quickly resolved locally without formal investigation, students should be **encouraged to report the concern via the Report & Support Platform**.
- Please submit the concern yourself via **Report & Support**, if it is not appropriate or possible for the student to do so, indicating that this is a student issue. This can include identifying the student if they consent, but you can report the incident or concern without their details if not.
- This applies even if the concern has also been reported on a placement provider system, to ensure that the concern reaches the University for investigation and action and to ensure the student is offered support if required.

Using Report and Support as a centralised mechanism is essential for us to be able to identify patterns and recurrent themes across disciplines and providers to improve student experience, and for reporting to regulatory bodies as we are required to do.

Further information about raising a concern is available in the student guidance including:

- The process for raising and escalating concerns, including the use of the [*Report and Support form*](#)
- Sources of support available to students during the process
- Addressing a student's anxiety about potential consequences of raising a concern
- Confidentiality and anonymity with their report
- Professional responsibilities and the role of raising concerns in improving care and learning
- The distinctions between raising concerns, making complaints, and providing placement feedback

Key message for staff

Supporting students to raise concerns is not solely about managing incidents. It is about creating an environment where concerns are welcomed, addressed appropriately, and used as opportunities to enhance patient care, safety and education.