



Student Support Guidebook

for Faculty and Staff



Student Support Guidebook

for Faculty and Staff



環境にやさしい植物油インキ
「VEGETABLE OIL INK」で
印刷しております。



Table of Contents

Introduction

1. Basic Principle and Approach for Student Support	3
2. Student Support Q&A	
(1) Issues Related to academic progress (Q1 – Q8)	13
(2) Issues Related to Research (Q9 – Q14)	21
(3) Issues Related to Interpersonal Relationships (Q15 – Q25)	27
(4) Psychological Issues (Q26 – Q34)	38
3. List of Service Desks	
(1) List of on-campus service desks	49
(2) List of off-campus service desks	52
(3) About the Center for Counseling and Disability Services	53

■ Japanese & English version here
日本語版・英語版 PDF はこちらから



Introduction

Across universities nationwide, numbers of international students and students with disabilities are trending upwards, as are students entering from a variety of backgrounds and developmental stages. In other words, the diversification of students is currently ongoing and is expected to continue in the future. Therefore, university faculty and staff are required to understand and respond to students with this in mind.

Student support is part of education, and all faculty and staff involved with students in university education have roles to play in their respective positions. Tohoku University established the Center for Counseling and Disability Services as a specialized department for student support. Our center consists of the Counseling Office that addresses various concerns related to student life and the Disability Services Office that assists with academic and life difficulties caused by disabilities. We are aware of the increasing diversity and complexity of the problems faced by students in individual consultations and support provided at our center. On the other hand, there has been an increase in consultations from faculty and staff who find it difficult to deal with students in classes, research guidance, and administrative services, so there is a strong need to support faculty and staff in understanding and responding to students.

Therefore, this guidebook organizes basic concepts and mindset for student support, and addresses issues involving students or related problems that faculty and staff may encounter, summarizing knowledge and procedures in a Q&A format. It was created with the aim of serving as a reference for faculty and staff when interacting with students. We sincerely hope you will make use of it.

Keep in mind that various situations involving students beyond those covered in this guide may arise, and you may sometimes feel puzzled or confused when trying to understand and respond to students. In such cases, please feel free to consult our center. We will work with you to consider how to address each issue. We believe that the role of this center is to provide psychological support to all students so that they can lead healthy student lives both physically and mentally. At the same time, we aim to enhance the university's student support capabilities through collaboration and cooperation with faculty and staff.

Director of the Center for Counseling and Disability Services, Tohoku University
Tadayoshi Ikeda

Basic Principle and Approach for Student Support

Contributing to Student Growth and Enrichment

Faculty and staff interact with students in various situations. For teachers, the focus is on teaching and research guidance. They may engage with students in settings where they can learn about each individual, such as small classes or laboratory/seminar guidance, or in large lecture halls where this is more difficult. For staff members, their interaction with students may be limited to a single occasion, such as addressing a question at an academic affairs desk, or they may have multiple conversations with the same student to explain or confirm administrative procedures.

In any case, educational involvement by faculty and staff leads to the growth of students and the enrichment of student life. This is likely one of the reasons why faculty and staff find their work rewarding and enjoyable. On the other hand, there may be times when you encounter students or situations that leave you unsure about how to interpret and respond to student needs.

With the diversification of students, including an increasing number of international students and students with disabilities, providing more careful and individualized support is important.

Below, we will introduce the basics of interpreting and responding to student needs.

1 Build a good relationship with students

In any situation, whether it is teaching, research guidance, or administrative interactions, the foundation of education is the relationship with the student in front of you. It is first necessary to respect them and build a warm relationship. Without this, it is impossible to provide a good education.

Students have various personalities. Some interact politely with faculty and staff, while others are more casual. Teachers and staff members are also human beings with their own personalities, so there are some students they naturally feel close to or have a favorable impression of, and others they do not. This is quite natural, but it can sometimes lead to differences in how they interact with students based on compatibility. If this goes too far, it may cause some students to feel dissatisfaction or a sense of unfairness, and in some cases, this can escalate into trouble. Keeping in mind that students are diverse and still developing, it is important to respect each individual.

The most fundamental actions for building a good relationship with students are everyday greetings and casual check-ins. These convey that you care about them and provide a sense of security. Because students often feel more distant from faculty and staff than they realize, initiatives help close the gap and lead to better relationships.

2 Get to know the students

To build a good relationship with students, it is important to understand each student well. However, students do not always share all their thoughts and feelings with faculty and staff. Therefore, it is important to increase opportunities for conversation to convey a caring attitude. This reassures the students that someone is looking out for them. Even if you do not have many opportunities for conversation, you can still understand the students' feelings and changes by observing them carefully. If a student is in distress, it is important to infer their feelings from external signs, such as their behavior, facial expressions, and physical condition.

The basic things to watch for is behavior/appearance that is different from others or from usual. If a certain student stands out from other students, they may have strong idiosyncrasies that cause them to struggle to adapt to university life. If a student's behavior is different from usual, there may have been a significant change in their mental state or situation. For faculty and staff to notice such things, it is necessary to regularly observe the student's overall situation and individual characteristics. Generally, situations that require timely support include increased absences or tardiness, distressed facial expressions, signs of irritation, and gaining or losing weight rapidly.

Knowing the students well and trying to understand them enables you to build good relationships with them and provide prompt support.

3 Imagine the students from multiple perspectives

Besides your relationships with the students, you will often come to know them through direct interactions. However, one thing to keep in mind is that you may only be encountering one aspect of that student. In many cases, students are on guard and show a composed demeanor when interacting with faculty and staff. This is especially true in settings like classes and research supervision where students interact with teachers; in laboratories or seminars, their motivated side often comes to the forefront, and they often do not express their struggles.

Precisely for that reason, imagining the students' current and past life outside of their interactions with you leads to a better understanding of them. Regarding their current life, try to imagine how they spend their time outside of academic and research activities. Knowing which clubs or circles they belong to and what part-time jobs they do allows you to picture them during those times. Also, try to imagine what kind of students they were during their elementary, junior high, and high school years before entering university. There are students who have had good lives at every stage, while there are others who have struggled with academics, friendships, and have tended to distance themselves from school. Also, some students may have faced hardships due to their family's financial situation or relationships within the family.

By imagining such scenarios, you can gain a multi-faceted perspective on them and understand them.

4 Listen to the students

When talking with students, first listen carefully to what they have to say. This point is especially important when dealing with students who may require some form of support.

Make sure to listen to the students and hear them out completely when conversing with them. Although you might feel like sharing your thoughts or opinions, please refrain from interrupting and until they are done. When we reflect on our everyday conversations, we often realize how frequently we start speaking before the other person has finished (even before the end of their sentence). Wait at least until the other person finishes their sentence before you start speaking. This is important regardless of the topic.

When listening to someone's concerns or difficulties, waiting becomes especially important. This is what we call "active listening." At such times, the key is to pay attention to the other person's feelings rather than being too concerned about whether what they say is factually accurate. Advice is not always necessary; it is important to listen fully. By listening attentively, the student will feel that they were properly heard and their feelings were validated. This can help them to organize their thoughts and feelings.

Try to recall what kind of facial expression and responses you have seen others make when they've felt they were sufficiently heard. That will be a useful reference when considering your own approach. Just as a student's actions and expressions reveal their psychological state, your own attitude while listening reveals yours.

5 Pay attention to minority students

It goes without saying that all students should be treated with care, but particular attention should be given to minority students. Specifically, these include students entering from other universities, transfer students, graduate school entrants, and female students belonging to male-dominated fields. Additionally, international students and students with disabilities are also minority groups, although their numbers are currently increasing and are expected to continue to do so.

These students often require time to get accustomed to the university's learning and research environment as well as interpersonal relationships. They tend to struggle with adapting to student life compared to other students. In particular, in terms of interpersonal aspects, they may find it difficult to establish new relationships or end up with a narrower range of social contacts, which can make it harder for them to access information shared among students. Also, because they may hesitate to express difficulties, they often bear their problems and anxieties alone, making it harder for those around them to understand, which in some cases can intensify their feelings of isolation.

For these reasons, it is necessary to make a special effort to actively reach out to minority students, especially at the start of the school year or term, and carefully help them get off to a good start. Also, it is desirable to take measures that promote interaction and connections among students and to establish a system for counseling students about problems promptly.

6 Use two-way communication

To enable students to understand your intentions and feelings, it is necessary to use words that convey meaning. In Japanese, tsutaeru (伝える, to tell) and tsutawaru (伝わる, to convey) differ by only one character, but their meanings are different. Tsutaeru is from the speaker's perspective, indicating one-way communication directed at the listener, whereas tsutawaru refers to two-way communication that encompasses the relationship between the speaker and listener. Using words that convey meaning ensures that what you want to communicate is properly received by the student, facilitating mutual understanding and consensus building. We recommend you focus on how students perceive words and expressions that you may consider natural, and whether you fully understand the language students themselves use.

Faculty and staff are responsible for both conveying correct information and specialized knowledge and skills to students and boosting their motivation, i.e. their educational engagement. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the outcome of the students' efforts but also to the process, and to use words that enhance their motivation. For example, when learning or research has not progressed sufficiently, it is necessary not only to communicate that fact but also to first acknowledge and appreciate the efforts made so far and then specifically convey what is needed moving forward. It is important to express your expectation for the student's growth too, e.g. by saying, "I want you to do your best from now on."

7 Focus on what to say and how to say it

Communication can be divided into verbal and nonverbal communication. When talking face-to-face, the former corresponds to what is said and the latter to how it is said. Linguistic communication involves the content of what we say or convey, which is something we are consciously aware of. On the other hand, nonverbal communication relates to how we speak and convey messages (such as volume, facial expressions, gestures, and quantity), and is something we are less consciously aware of. Furthermore, we convey much more to each other through nonverbal aspects than through language. For example, if someone says "Thank you" while turning away with a sullen expression, you won't feel very thanked. This is because we pick up the message from their attitude more strongly than from the words themselves. Therefore, when interacting with students, it is very important to be aware of your own facial expressions, posture, and volume of voice.

It is important to be aware that communication through emails or other written messages tends to rely heavily on verbal communication. For example, when replying "Understood" to an email from a student containing contact or report information, they cannot tell whether you are smiling or have a stern expression. The same applies when we receive the same response from a student. Emojis used on social media (such as smiling or crying faces) serve to supplement nonverbal communication, and the Japanese characters (笑) (laughing) and (泣) (crying) used in emails serve the same function. In the earlier example of "Understood," adding words that express our emotions, such as "I was happy to hear from you" or "I am relieved to get your message," makes it easier to convey our intentions.

8 Know your own personality well

When interacting with students, it is also important for educators themselves to be self-aware. It is helpful to reflect on questions like "What kind of students do I find likable, and what kind do I find difficult?" and "What are phrases or words I often use?"

Just as faculty and staff try to understand and engage with students, students also watch faculty and staff just as seriously, if not more so. This is because faculty and staff can significantly influence their academics, research, and student life. It can be said that both faculty and students observe and evaluate each other. Therefore, it is important for faculty and staff to know their own characteristics and understand how they are perceived by students. If you feel that students misunderstand or do not fully understand you, it is necessary to make efforts to help them understand.

However, students do not necessarily talk about how they see and evaluate faculty and staff. Especially, the higher one's position, the harder it is to obtain feedback from students. For that reason, it is important to reflect on yourself and, if possible, to ask close faculty and staff about your traits and personality. Sometimes there are students who will directly tell you these things. It might be hard to hear, but if they speak up it is because they have a certain level of trust in you, so listen carefully.

9 Collaborate with concerned parties

The more responsible the faculty and staff are, the harder they want to work to help the students. On the other hand, there are also many situations where the cooperation of others is necessary or effective. When students convey their difficulties regarding course registration, staying on track for graduation, graduation, career paths, and other activities, it is necessary to connect them to specialized departments and faculty members who can address their issues. Therefore, it is important to familiarize yourself with other departments and faculty members, and moreover, to have established relationships with them at all times.

If students share serious concerns or problems only with you, they are probably confiding in you precisely because they trust you. Therefore, you must refrain from sharing any information about them without their consent. On the other hand, there are many cases where it is difficult to handle the situation alone and the cooperation of other faculty members or the student's family is necessary. In such cases, clearly inform the student about the scope of information you wish to share, obtain their consent, and work together with the relevant parties. However, if there is a risk that the student may commit suicide, harm themselves, or harm others, you may have to contact the relevant parties and respond without the student's consent. Respect the student's intentions, be careful not to take on too much responsibility alone, and strive to work in cooperation with various people involved with the student in addressing the situation. For students who seem difficult to handle, please consider connecting them with specialists such as counselors from one of the student counseling offices or psychiatrists from the Student Health Care Center.

10 Take care of your own health

Just as the health of students is important, the health of faculty and staff is also crucial, as it forms the basis for providing better education to students. Therefore, please be sure to pay close attention to your physical and mental condition and strive to lead a healthy lifestyle.

In professional life, a completely stress-free situation is rare, and concerns always arise to some degree, whether related to work or personal relationships. However, if these concerns become too overwhelming, they can affect your health and potentially interfere with your work. Therefore, it is important to be aware of your condition when under stress and have your own stress relief methods. Reaction to stress can go in several directions: psychological, physical, and behavioral. Psychologically, it can result in symptoms such as depression and lethargy; physically, it can cause headaches, stomachaches, stiff shoulders, and insomnia; behaviorally, it may lead to overeating, binge drinking, and irritable behavior. Because reactions vary from person to person, knowing which way you tend to react makes it easier to understand whether you are under stress. Also, take time to physically and mentally step away from the workplace and your duties to relieve stress and refresh your mind. If you are considering a new hobby or similar activity, it's good to prioritize your desire to do it rather than it being something you must do. Reflecting on familiar experiences from childhood or school days might provide useful hints.

**Student Support
Q & A**

(1) Issues related to academic progress**Q1**

A student suddenly stopped coming to classes or the laboratory. How should we respond?

A Many faculty and staff may have difficulty with students who stop coming to classes or the laboratory without notice. Many students live alone having left their family homes, so if they continue to be absent, those around them become increasingly worried. Here, we offer some hints on understanding and responding to students who find themselves in such situations.

Understanding the student:

There are broadly two reasons why students might stop coming classes or their research labs.

The first possibility is that the student has become so absorbed in other activities that they are neglecting their academic work. For example, some become overly involved in club activities, circles, or part-time jobs, or they get absorbed in games, social media, or watching videos late into the night, causing their daily rhythms to become disrupted. Sometimes students lose sight of the significance of studying and their prospects too.

Secondly, some experience mental health issues, such as feeling down and lacking the energy to move during the morning or daytime or have anxiety and negative thoughts at night that prevent them from sleeping.

Possible solutions:

If you notice that a student has not come to class or the laboratory, it is advisable to contact the student as soon as possible to check on their situation. If you find that the student is overly focused on activities outside of academics and their daily routine is disturbed, it is helpful to specifically consider what can be done to review and regulate their lifestyle. In doing so, securing time for studies and sleep should be prioritized. Also, if the student has lost sight of the significance of their studies or future, it is important not to rely on persuasion or instruction but to listen carefully to their doubts and show a willingness to continuously think through it together rather than trying to resolve everything in a single meeting.

If a student is experiencing mental health issues such as depression, increased anxiety, or insufficient sleep, it is advisable to first encourage them to visit the Student Health Care Center or an external psychiatric clinic, or to recommend consulting with counseling services including those at the Counseling Office. Depending on the student's condition, it may also be necessary to consider recuperation at home or taking a leave of absence from school. If a student shows strong anxiety about visiting a clinic or counseling, accompanying them may help them feel more comfortable and able to seek medical advice or counseling. If you are unsure of how to respond to any situation, please consult the Counseling Office.

Q2

**A student has been continuously absent from a compulsory class.
How should we handle this situation?**

A If a student has been continuously absent from a compulsory class, you might be concerned about how this could affect their credits. This is especially true for classes that require a certain attendance rate. You may also be concerned about their enrollment status in other classes. Below is an introduction on how to respond in such cases.

Understanding the student:

The reasons behind students missing mandatory classes include illness, poor physical condition, loss of interest in the class, and disruption to daily routines. In cases where the student is motivated to study and wants to attend school but is temporarily unable to due to illness or poor physical condition, they may return to class once they recover. On the other hand, if their motivation to study decreases, leading to a loss of interest in classes and disruption to daily routines, it is possible that they will become chronically absent.

Furthermore, if students fail to notify the instructor of their absence, it may be due to them not knowing that they should report it, or being unable or reluctant to do so.

Possible solutions:

First, it is important to understand the reasons for the student's absence and their situation, as well as to find out why there has been no notification of their absence. There are two ways to ascertain the student's situation: either contact the student directly, or inform the academic affairs office, which will contact the student. When contacting students, it is more important to first ask about the student's situation than to warn them that they will not be able to earn credits. If multiple instructors are teaching the course, it is important to share the student's situation among the relevant parties and consider how to respond.

If a student is temporarily absent from classes due to illness or poor physical condition, please wait for the student's recovery and provide materials for the missed lessons. If there is a possibility that the student may become chronically absent, it is necessary to share information with the faculty's academic affairs office and the academic committee to consider appropriate measures. At that time, confirming attendance in other classes will also make it easier to decide on the course of action. You may also consider consulting, or encouraging the student to visit, the Counseling Office.

Considering the possibility that students might not know they are supposed to notify instructors about absences, we recommend explaining this during class guidance and providing contact information in advance.

Q3

What should I do about students who attend classes but do not submit class assignments?

A Some teachers may have students who attend classes and appear serious in their attitude but do not submit assignments such as reports. Here, we will discuss how to understand and deal with such students.

Understanding the student:

Failure to submit class assignments may be due to mistakes such as forgetting to click the final submission button in the online system or submitting to the wrong email address or mailbox, but other possibilities should also be considered. For example, if the student has strong perfectionist tendencies, unless the work is 100% perfect, they will not be satisfied and will not submit it. Also, some students struggle with schedule management and multitasking, leading to missed deadlines or difficulty organizing information and end up forgetting tasks or deadlines. In the latter case, it is possible that the student's inherent qualities or characteristics are influencing this, and some of them may be dealing with developmental disorders.

Possible solutions:

When you notice that an assignment has not been submitted despite the student's good attitude in class and attendance, first ask the student directly, e.g. "I see that the assignment hasn't been submitted. What happened?"

If it turns out to be due to a mistake in the submission method, explain the correct submission procedure. If it is due to perfectionism, perhaps advise them that what's important is to just do as much as possible and submit by the deadline. If a student is very concerned about the completeness of their assignment, if possible, review the parts they have completed so far and provide specific advice. This can help them approach the task with greater confidence afterward. If difficulties such as poor schedule management or information organization are due to the student's own qualities or characteristics, it may be difficult to cope with these issues through the student's efforts alone. Providing a reminder a week before the assignment deadline, explaining the assignment in detail to provide clarity, and conveying the assignment instructions not only verbally but also through distributed materials can make it easier to engage with the task. These measures may be applied to all enrolled students.

Class instructors who are uncertain about how to handle the situation should consult the Counseling Office. Also, if the student seems to be deeply troubled about their studies, please encourage them to consult with the Counseling Office or a similar service.

Q4

How should we handle student who appear to be motivated but cannot complete experiments or assignments that we want them to do on their own?

A Some instructors may struggle with how to guide students who cannot perform experiments or assignments independently, even though they are expected to do so during the research guidance. Students who appear to lack motivation will be addressed separately, but here, we will focus on students who desire to conduct research.

Understanding the student:

When a student is motivated but unable to carry out an experiment or task that the supervising teacher wishes them to do alone, the following possibilities can be considered. First, it may be that the student is inexperienced in performing research independently and lacks basic knowledge or skills. Due to this, even if they try to do experiments or assignments, they may not be able to find a solution on their own. Even if the teacher explains how to do it, the student might have difficulty with the execution. In other words, the student might not know what they don't know. This is sometimes observed in students who change their research lab or research theme upon advancing to graduate school.

Next, there are cases where students recognize what they don't know but have strong anxiety or discomfort about asking teachers or senior students questions. This may be because their inquiries were not handled politely in the past, or they feel overwhelmed by the many things they don't understand and don't know where to start seeking advice. This tends to be seen especially in students who are generally poor at self-assertion, those who transferred from other universities, or international students.

Possible solutions:

First, it is important to talk with the student and clarify the underlying reasons for being unable to complete experiments or assignments. Also, if the student lacks basic knowledge and skills, it is good to encourage them to gradually get used to research by having teachers or senior students work with them on experiments and assignments or read papers together. Regularly providing opportunities to discuss progress and give feedback, as well as being willing to think of solutions together when progress is slow, can help boost the students' motivation and independence.

Next, for those who are not comfortable asking questions to teachers or senior students, please encourage them to ask questions without hesitation whenever they don't understand something. It might also be a good idea to convey this in advance during orientation or similar sessions after entering the school. Furthermore, students transferring from other universities or international students often need some time to get used to the new environment and interpersonal relationships in the laboratory. Try to create opportunities for laboratory members to interact with each other outside of research activities. As students get used to the environment and interpersonal relationships, they will naturally become more comfortable consulting others, so it is important to watch over students with that mindset.

Q5

What should we do about students who cannot seem to follow emailed instructions on class assignments or research methodology?

A You might find it puzzling or odd that some students cannot follow detailed instructions you have emailed them regarding class assignments and research. The following points should be considered regarding the students' background and your response.

Understanding the student:

There are situations where students are unable to carry out assignments as instructed, including cases where they cannot proceed at the pace expected by the teacher or are not working in accordance with the given instructions. Regarding the former, some students have difficulty managing multiple assignments simultaneously or switching to a task after being absorbed in a different one, leading to an inability to meet assignment or research deadlines. Regarding the latter, it is possible that they have misunderstood the instructions and are working on the task based on that misunderstanding. There could also be developmental disabilities underlying such problems.

Other factors may include not being able to proceed because they do not understand the task, and/or feel unable to ask or consult a teacher despite this.

Possible solutions:

First, discuss the issue with the student to identify the context and reasons for the task not going well. If similar issues occur in other situations beyond class and research guidance, it may be due to inherent qualities or characteristics of the individual, separate from their motivation or willingness. In such cases, it would be good to consider specific remedies together with the student, taking these factors into account. If the student has difficulty focusing on and proceeding with multiple tasks simultaneously, it is important to help them think about their priorities and advise on scheduling strategies. Also, if the student has misunderstood the instructions, it is necessary to reconfirm their content and intent.

If students feel unable to ask questions or consult with teachers, it is important to create a relationship in which they can consult openly and without hesitation. It is effective to consciously create opportunities to talk with students, even if only casual conversation.

If necessary, please refer students to the Center for Counseling and Disability Services. Also, if you are unsure about how to interact with a student, please feel free to consult with us yourself.

Q6

How should we deal with students who repeatedly make the same mistakes during experiments or practical training, and do not improve even after being warned?

A It is more common to notice students making the same mistakes despite being repeatedly warned in laboratory work or practical exercises than in lecture-style classes. Here, we will share some hints on how to understand and respond to such students.

Understanding the student:

Students who repeatedly make the same mistakes may not fully understand the instructions or individual procedures. There are students who find it difficult to listen to and understand explanations given only verbally. Some of these students may have developmental disabilities. There are also students who cannot understand vague expressions such as "roughly" and "approximately," or expressions that include unclear demonstratives like "that" or "this," and feel uncertain about what to do, to what extent, and how. Additionally, there are students who understand on an intellectual level but are clumsy or cannot move as they wish, which leads to mistakes in experiments and practical training.

When performing experiments or practical training in groups or pairs, students who are nervous or anxious in interpersonal situations often feel anxiety about their peers' gaze, wonder how others perceive them, or worry about failure and as a result cannot concentrate on their work and tend to repeat the same mistakes.

Possible solutions:

When explaining the instructions and procedures of experiments or practical training, it is advisable to explain concretely and clearly what needs to be done, to what extent, and how. If you convey too much information at once, it may be difficult to understand, so it is important to break the procedures and processes into small steps and clearly and concisely indicate points to watch out for or avoid. Also, distributing visual materials that students can review may give them a concrete understanding of the experiment or training exercise, allowing them to approach tasks with confidence.

When working in groups or pairs, it is important to pay attention not only to the whole but also to each individual group or pair. If there are students who want to participate but are unable to, encourage communication among the students. Students with disabilities can also apply for reasonable accommodation to adjust the surrounding environment. It is best to avoid reprimanding or pointing out issues outright and instead listen carefully to the students and think together about causes and other factors. It is also important to encourage them to feel free to consult or ask questions if there is something they do not understand or if they feel anxious.

If you find it difficult to understand the student or have trouble dealing with them, please feel free to consult the Counseling Office or the Disability Services Office.

Q7

If a student complains about their grades, how should I respond as the class instructor?

A Some instructors may have difficulty dealing with students who complain about their grades. It is inappropriate to change grades just because a student has complained. On the other hand, ignoring their complaints or failing to respond is also undesirable. Here, we will consider how to respond in such situations.

Understanding the student:

When students express dissatisfaction with their grades, there are several ways they may communicate this, such as visiting the teacher directly, sending an email, or going through the academic affairs office. Additionally, they may express this dissatisfaction in various ways, including communicating it logically or emotionally. It is important to pay attention to the circumstances surrounding the students, regardless of whether there are grading errors by the instructor. As the person in charge of the class, you may sometimes feel that a student is making unusually strong demands, but that student may be facing a critical juncture on their way to graduation or promotion. There may be other stresses unrelated to academics, such as uncertainty about career paths, financial difficulties, or problems with extracurricular activities. The student may contact the course instructor because they find the current situation difficult to accept, but expressing this feeling to the instructor can become an opportunity for communication.

Possible solutions:

When students express dissatisfaction with their grades, consider it a good opportunity to review and confirm their grades. Even if there is no mistake in your grading, responding to them is a form of educational engagement. Not responding, and not explaining the reasons for their grades, could unilaterally cut off communication and overlooks their feelings. A student finding their grade difficult to accept may not necessarily lead to a demand to change the grade, nor is changing the grade the only way to resolve the situation.

Therefore, first, carefully listen to the student. By doing so, the student may feel that they have been heard and their anxiety relieved. Also, some students might open up about other difficulties, such as indecision about their future, financial struggles, or trouble with extracurricular activities. In such cases, after listening, please connect them with the relevant services, such as the Center for Career Support (anxiety over their future/career path), Financial Support Section (economic issues), or Student Support Department (problems related to extracurricular activities). If psychological counseling is necessary, please tell the student about the Counseling Office.

Q8

How should we respond to students who repeatedly raise the same concerns at the Academic Affairs desk regarding course registration, credit recognition, etc.?

A It is not uncommon to encounter such students at the Academic Affairs desk or other offices. It can be challenging to handle these situations. Even if you explain many times, the student may not understand, and you may feel a sense of futility and fatigue, or that their demands are excessive, and become emotional or distressed. Here, we will talk about understanding such students and responding to them.

Understanding the student:

Repeated complaints received by Academic Affairs desks and other offices often involve requests for actions after the course registration/cancellation period has ended, demands for credit recognition or promotion approval, requests to reconfirm graduation credits, or dissatisfaction with tuition fee reductions. There are mainly two types of students who repeatedly make such complaints. The first type makes assertive demands, strongly believes these demands should be met, and cannot accept them going unfulfilled. When their demands are not met, it leads to distrust and a sense of aggrievement, making it difficult to gain their understanding with administrative explanations. In such cases, they often complain not only about their initial demands but also about the staff's response. The second type tends to repeat their demands due to strong anxieties about credits, academics, and financial matters. For example, they may be worried about failing to progress to the next grade, not being able to graduate, or not receiving a scholarship. Sometimes they talk about these anxieties from the start, but they may also begin to open up if you carefully listen to them.

Possible solutions:

The basic approach is to clearly indicate what can and cannot be done, along with the reasons, and strive to help the student understand. When doing this, it is important not to see the student simply as someone complaining, but to understand and respond to the background and psychological state of the student and consider why they keep raising the issue repeatedly. Also, it is necessary to respond not as an individual, but as an organization. Furthermore, strive to respond calmly and politely, use a gentle tone, and avoid emotional exchanges or arguments, even if the student expresses strong dissatisfaction.

When dealing with demanding students, it is important to keep records and share information. Record the date, time, and details of your response, and make sure to share this information among staff members. It is advisable to prepare responses in advance in case similar complaints arise. For example, it is helpful to have appropriate responses ready depending on the situation, such as "I'm sorry, but we cannot accommodate that request" or "I cannot give you an immediate answer. I will look into it and get back to you." If the student is especially anxious, it is important to first carefully listen to what exactly is causing this. This alone may ease the student's anxiety, their demands may lessen, and it may become possible to consider alternative solutions together.

(2) Issues related to research

Q9

How should we respond to students who find it difficult to progress with their research?

A Faculty members commonly encounter students in their laboratories or seminars whom they feel are not progressing with their research. While individualized support from faculty often improves the progress of these students, if research still does not advance well, the following factors may be considered as possible underlying reasons.

Understanding the student:

Undergraduate students who cannot get started on their graduation work may lack understanding of how to write papers and proceed with research, be unable to ask questions or consult with faculty or senior students, and lack a perception (awareness) of how much time they have to complete their research.

Also, if they have just started graduate studies, they may have burnout from their undergraduate/master's thesis, decreased motivation if their current graduate school was not their first choice, or a mismatched research theme that they were not interested in from the beginning. There are also students who suddenly stop working near graduation, just before completing their thesis. At such times, the closer the deadline, the more anxious the student feels, which can hinder thinking ability and concentration. When the end is in sight, the student might suddenly reflect on their past research and academic life and experience feelings of emptiness or purposelessness in their life.

Possible solutions:

Since such students may not know what and how much they can ask of their instructors, it is helpful to create a system in which senior students, who are closer in age to them, act as student TAs or mentors. This allows the students to consult and work their papers (such as graduation theses) together. At appropriate times, communicate to students your expectations regarding how far their research should have progressed by certain points. Furthermore, since motivation for research can increase over time as students become more accustomed to the laboratory environment, it can be effective to deliberately create opportunities to talk with students, even casually, while observing their progress and encouraging them to participate in laboratory events.

We have covered the background and key points of responding to the lack of progress in research so far, but other common reasons for research not progressing regardless of grade or timing include decreased motivation due to mental health issues such as depression, and difficulty concentrating due to interpersonal problems involving family, friends, or romantic partners. When a student talks about such issues, please listen carefully and if appropriate encourage them to visit the Counseling Office.

Q10

How should we respond to students whose research is stalled but who do not seek advice or ask questions?

A Teachers may encounter students who do not seek advice or ask questions even though their research is not going well. The teachers feel concerned about the future of these students as they may not be able to graduate or complete their studies, or worry that their guidance will be perceived as inadequate. Here, we will explain how to understand students who do not seek advice or ask questions, and how to interact with them.

Understanding the student:

There are several patterns among such students. First, these students may have been honor students in the past and were able to mostly complete tasks by themselves, so they have not developed the skill of consulting others or asking questions. Second, these students may be perfectionists who believe that before asking others questions, they must thoroughly research on their own up to a certain point. Third, these students may have had negative experiences such as being rebuffed or not receiving sufficient answers to their questions in the past, and therefore feel reluctant to consult others or ask questions. Fourth, these students might not even realize there is a problem with their research progress.

If a student's research is stalled and they do not consult or ask questions for a long time, they will gradually run out of time to finish their thesis by the submission deadline. When that happens, the students are at higher risk of falling into a vicious cycle that leads to absenteeism and social withdrawal.

Possible solutions:

It is important for the teacher to reach out to such students. If the student seems reluctant to discuss research topics, try starting with casual conversation. If the student tends to become intimidated and is unable to respond when approached directly by a teacher, one method might be to ask a student of a similar age to talk with them and check on their situation. For students who have not yet developed the skill of consulting others or asking questions, it is important first to encourage them to try these things, and to convey that better ideas can be born through discussions with others. For students who tend to be perfectionists, it is advisable to convey that when asking others questions, it is better to ask as soon as they find something unclear, and that it's acceptable for the question to be somewhat incomplete in that sense. If the student has had negative past experiences, it is important to convey that they should choose who they approach questions to carefully, because there are some people they will get along with and people others they won't. It might be helpful to listen to the student and consider together which students they would get along well with. Finally, for students who do not have a clear grasp of their situation, it is important to listen to them and help make specific plans for them and their schedules together.

Q11

How should we respond to students who come to the laboratory but seem unmotivated and spend the whole day goofing off?

A Although the motivation for research varies among students, students who seem unmotivated and spend the whole day idly in the laboratory are worrisome as they may not graduate or complete their studies successfully. You might also be concerned about the impact of such behavior on other students and the overall atmosphere of the laboratory. How should we understand and respond to such students? Here, we will present some hints.

Understanding the student:

Behind students who appear unmotivated, there may be factors such as loss of interest in their research or specific research area, lack of understanding about how to proceed, or mental health issues such as depression.

Some students may experience a decline in motivation when they find it difficult to understand the meaning and significance of their research, are assigned to a laboratory other than their preferred one, receive a research theme that does not match their interests, or face challenges in producing research results. Among students with limited research experience, some lose motivation because they do not know how to proceed, e.g. how to choose a theme or methodology. Also, in some cases, there may be a decline in motivation due to mental health issues such as a depression.

In any case, students who seem unmotivated often have feelings of self-loathing or internal conflict about themselves, compared to their peers who are progressing well.

Possible solutions:

Instead of scolding or reprimanding the student for lacking motivation, it is better to imagine the background behind it and offer to discuss it with them so they can make some progress, even if only a little. Some students do not openly discuss what they cannot understand or do, so it is important to consciously create opportunities to talk with them, even if it starts with casual conversation. In some cases, please consider providing specific advice related to the research, such as changes to the topic or methodology, proposals regarding the theme or approach, or environmental adjustments such as the assignment of senior students as mentors.

Additionally, if psychological consultation or care seems necessary, please refer the student to the Counseling Office, and if medical care such as medication is deemed necessary, please refer them to the Student Health Care Center. However, if the student continues to lack motivation, it can be effective to switch to a plan that extends the graduation or completion period with the student's consent, allowing more time for research, or to have the student take a temporary leave of absence.

Q12

How should we respond to students who are absent repeatedly from the seminar/laboratory without contacting us, even after we email them expressing concern?

A It is not uncommon to encounter students who are absent from their laboratory or seminar without notice. Some of these students return promptly, but if the absence extends over a long period, they may become chronically absent or socially withdrawn, causing increasing concern for the faculty members. How should we understand and respond to students who are chronically absent, socially withdrawn, or showing signs of these conditions? Here, we will offer some hints.

Understanding the student:

Various factors may lead to chronic absences and social withdrawal. For example, having a busy research schedule, research setbacks, loss of interest or motivation in their field, uncertainty about career paths, relationship difficulties within the laboratory or seminar groups, and problems in family relationships. Even if each issue is trivial on its own, when they accumulate, motivation can decrease, and physical symptoms such as difficulty waking up in the morning, inability to eat, or trouble sleeping may appear. In some cases, this can lead to absences or social withdrawal.

If students concentrate on research activities without taking breaks, they may experience temporary burnout, making it difficult to go to the laboratory or seminar. If their research activities do not progress as expected and their enthusiasm decreases, they may take a step back and spend some time exploring other paths or lifestyles. Finally, it is not uncommon for students to be absent due to interpersonal issues within the lab (between faculty and students, or among students).

Possible solutions:

If a student is repeatedly absent, it is advisable to contact them directly by phone or email a few times to express concern without being overly persistent. If the student still does not respond, it is necessary to check on their wellbeing, so please share information with other students and laboratory staff. If the student lives alone, contact their family to have them check on the student's condition. If necessary, please consider having someone from the laboratory visit the student's apartment, take them back to their family home to rest, or refer them to medical or counseling services.

If the student can return to school after resting for a while, it is important to gently monitor them for some time. If those around the student remark on their absence, downplay their difficulties, or make them anxious (e.g. "Why were you absent?", "You're mentally weaker than I thought," or "You'll have to work harder to graduate since you took time off," etc.) it can hinder the student's return.

In some cases, it may take a long time for the student to return, but faculty members are asked to please adopt an attitude of "waiting and accepting," while considering whether the student should take an academic leave of absence.

Q13

When conducting experiments and research, how should we handle students who cannot determine priorities when given several instructions, such as when investigating multiple subjects or conducting multiple experiments.

A During experiments and research, there may be students who, when given multiple instructions, start working in an order unrelated to priority, freeze because they don't know where to begin, or focus so much on the first task that they don't work on anything else. Here, we will explain how to understand and respond to such students.

Understanding the student:

When instructors give multiple instructions for experiments/research there may be students who begin tasks in an order unrelated to priority, or who stall midway. Among such students, some do not understand the importance of the tasks or fail to grasp the order in which they should proceed unless explicitly told, leading them to start in a sequence unrelated to priority based on their own judgment, or become confused about where to start and freeze, causing the work to stop.

Additionally, some students are perfectionists and become completely unable to do anything else due to focusing too much on the initial task. Due to this tendency toward perfectionism, they may believe that all instructions must be completed 100%, causing them to focus on a single task until it is perfect and preventing them from starting other tasks. Or they may spend as much time and energy on low-priority tasks as on high-priority ones and take a considerable amount of time to finish all the tasks.

Possible solutions:

When encountering students like those mentioned above, it is advisable to first investigate why the student cannot determine priorities. An inability to understand the importance of a task or proceed unless the order is explicitly stated may be due to inherent traits of that student, which could be difficult to address solely through the student's own efforts. In such cases, it is advisable to clearly indicate the importance of tasks and the order in which they should be tackled, for example, by visually representing this information.

If perfectionism is involved, the student will have a strong tendency to continue working until each task is perfectly completed. If possible, check their progress midway and instruct them to move on to the next task as needed. Furthermore, it may be helpful to convey that meeting the deadline is more important than completing the task perfectly.

If you are unsure how to respond in similar situations, please feel free to consult the Counseling Office or the Disability Services Office. We will work together on how to respond to individual situations.

Q14 How should we deal with students who act selfishly or do not follow laboratory rules about arrival time, contacting us about absences, etc.?

A You may encounter, and need to deal with, students who cannot follow the laboratory rules or behave selfishly. There may be situations where such students cause delays in collaborative research, confusion among teachers because they do not understand the students' situation, or deterioration in the atmosphere, making it difficult to manage the laboratory. Here, we will provide some hints on how to understand and respond to such students.

Understanding the student:

Students who cannot follow rules or act selfishly may have a fundamentally weak inclination toward following rules. This occurs when they do not fully understand the rules or their necessity, or when they understand them but lack a strong awareness of norms that would compel them to follow the rules.

Furthermore, even if they are disposed to abide by the rules, they may be perceived as acting selfishly. For instance, some students may have developmental disabilities that cause them to struggle with implicit rules that most students understand or would consider obvious, or prevent them from grasping others' intentions, making them behave in a way that is inappropriate to the situation. There are also students who cannot stay still and act impulsively, as well as students who struggle to manage their schedules and maintain a regular daily rhythm. Among students with mental illness, there are some who have difficulty falling asleep due to psychological issues, and others whose sleep patterns are disrupted, making it hard for them to get up in the morning despite wanting to, leading to tardiness.

Possible solutions:

It is important to carefully explain the rules and their necessity, including implicit rules. When doing this, it is desirable to clarify the content and put it into writing, rather than just explaining it orally. Regardless of whether the student has a disability, this facilitates concrete understanding and sharing of the rules for all students.

If a student frequently does not follow the rules, it is also important to respond individually. Listen to the student's circumstances and think about solutions together. For example, if the student has difficulty managing schedules due to developmental disabilities, it is helpful to break down the necessary tasks and explain how to approach them in small steps. If a student has a mental health issue and cannot get up in the morning, listen carefully to their circumstances and, if the symptoms are severe, advise them to avoid pushing themselves and to rest for as long as they need. The person may not be aware of their own condition. If the student understands the reason, they may calm down and be able to take concrete actions. If you observe that the student seems to be troubled by their own self-centered behavior, please recommend they consult the Counseling Office.

(3) Issues related to interpersonal relationships

Q15 How should I respond to students who ignore or only argue when given feedback regarding experiments or research?

A Some students may ignore or argue with the teacher regarding feedback on experiments or research. It is natural to feel various emotions such as confusion, anger, or disappointment if you are ignored or contradicted by students. However, since responding emotionally is unlikely to produce good results, we will provide some tips to help you manage the situation more easily.

Understanding the student:

Broadly speaking, the background of such behavior can be largely attributed either to personal factors, such as stubbornly holding onto one's own ideas, or to interpersonal factors, such as the relationship with the teacher.

In the former case, students may be fixated on the research theme they want to pursue or firmly believe that the experimental methods and direction they have devised are correct. Alternatively, students may have preconceived ideas about how research should be conducted or may feel frustrated about producing good results, which could cause them to have a narrow perspective.

In the latter case, it is advisable to pay attention to whether they ignore or argue with only the teacher, or if they exhibit similar behavior towards other students and people as well. If the issues arise only in the relationship with the teacher, the student may feel that the teacher's feedback is abstract, difficult to understand, or overbearing, or the student may be dissatisfied due to the teacher being away on business frequently and having few opportunities to communicate. If the student is not getting along well with other students or people, the student's own factors, such as poor communication skills, might play a major role.

Possible solutions:

If a student is fixated on their own ideas or values, it might be helpful to listen to their opinions and, together with them, review what they want to do and the overall picture of their research to help them broaden their perspective. Also, if the student feels overly pressured to produce research results, it might be good to tell them that there is no need to rush.

If the relationship with the instructor is a significant factor, it is important to build a trusting relationship with the student. For that purpose, please reflect once again on your past interactions with them and consider concrete measures. For example, giving explanations that are easy to understand, observing the student's reactions to explanations to ensure they understand, and consciously creating opportunities for communication.

If the student is struggling to maintain good relationships with other students and faculty members too, it is likely that they are feeling distress, so please encourage them to consult the Counseling Office. Additionally, please have teachers conduct regular meetings with students to monitor their condition and make use of your faculty's Counseling Office or the Counseling Office.

Q16 What should we do if students in research labs or seminars harass other students who do not agree with their opinions?

A Research labs and seminars attract students with different personalities. In some cases, when a student harasses another student who does not agree with their opinion, it may cause the harassed student's research activities to be disrupted and the overall atmosphere to become gloomy. It can be difficult to handle them. Here, we will explain how to understand and deal with such students.

Understanding the student:

Students who harass others who do not share their opinions can be broadly classified into two categories. First, some students have both strong fixations and poor communication skills. Although they themselves act according to their own sense of justice and standards of correctness, they find it difficult to incorporate others' opinions or cooperate with those around them, which can lead to aggressive behavior.

Second, some students have confidence in their own abilities and a strong sense of superiority to other students, combined with low empathy or compassion. While having high self-esteem, they also tend to be easily hurt by remarks or criticism from others, becoming defensive and responding with aggressive behavior when given feedback they cannot accept. The competitive atmosphere of the research environment can sometimes exacerbate this tendency. Furthermore, a common underlying factor in these behaviors may be the presence of some stress related to academics, family relationships, or future career.

Possible solutions:

When a student who is being harassed seeks consultation, it is necessary to listen to them, organize the facts and their requests, and create an environment where the student can focus on their research with peace of mind. Depending on the content of the request, it is basically also necessary to listen to the student who is engaging in the harassment and remind them that it is important to respect not only their own feelings but also the feelings of others. Sometimes, a student who is harassing others is actually under some kind of stress, and with attention and care from faculty and staff, they can be prompted to correct their behavior. If a student who is engaging in harassment wishes to reconsider how they interact with others, we recommend referring them to the Counseling Office. In dealing with these situations, it is advisable not to handle them alone, but to share the matter with concerned parties and consider appropriate responses.

If the content or severity of the behavior is serious, it is likely to include infractions of university policy on student conduct or borderline infractions. Faculty members who are in a position to practically supervise others, such as the head professor of a laboratory, are responsible for preventing and handling harassment. It is important to regularly raise awareness about harassment and to encourage students to seek consultation immediately if they have trouble. It is also acceptable to recommend consultation at Harassment Counseling Office for Students or the Counseling Office.

Q17 Certain students within the laboratory seem to be in a confrontational relationship with each other. Students on both sides of the dispute have consulted with us, but how should we deal with them?

A There are sometimes compatibility issues among students, and they are not always on good terms. Sometimes conflicts arise over the way research is conducted, the division of roles in the laboratory, or personal issues such as complicated romantic feelings, which may affect laboratory activities. Here, we will explain how faculty members should respond when they need to get involved in student relationships.

Understanding the student:

Confrontational relationships among students can arise not only among classmates but also between seniors and juniors. In the confined space and interpersonal relationships of the laboratory, students often have to interact with people they don't get along with, which tends to give rise to such issues. While many students manage to compromise by respecting each other's individuality, when problems between students cannot be resolved and confrontations escalate, it becomes the responsibility of the faculty to intervene. When a teacher listens to students, it often happens that the two students explain their situations from their own perspectives, resulting in conflicting accounts. Therefore, it is often not clear which side is at fault.

In antagonistic relationships, sometimes a problem exists only between two parties, and sometimes a student is having trouble with multiple other students. In the former case, the issue likely lies in the relationship between the two, while in the latter, the individual's personality may be influencing the situation. Also, while the anxieties and complaints that students raise to faculty members may stem just from the relationships between the students, other stress factors, such as research not progressing well, may be exacerbating the trouble.

Possible solutions:

Rather than focusing on clarifying the truth by listening to both sides, it is important to listen with an emphasis on how the individuals feel, focusing on their emotions.

When a confrontational relationship exists only between two parties, the instructor should listen carefully to both as this alone can lead to a change in the students' feelings and perspectives. If a practical response is needed, it is advisable to work together with each student to think about what an ideal resolution would look like. If one student is involved in trouble with multiple students, it is necessary to grasp the overall situation in the laboratory and focus efforts on the individual causing the trouble. For example, encourage them to reflect on how their own words and actions are perceived by other students and what kind of impact they have. Also, if it becomes clear that there are other stress factors, such as research, behind antagonistic relationships among students, aim to resolve those issues.

If teachers have trouble dealing with students, they can consult the Counseling Office themselves. We will work together to understand and resolve the issue. Also, if a student complains of physical or mental health problems during a conversation, please recommend that they consult the Counseling Office or similar services.

Q18

**What should we do if,
due to complications in a romantic relationship,
a student from one laboratory is stalking a student from another?**

A Interpersonal problems often happen among students within the same laboratory, but sometimes, students from one laboratory stalk students from another, leading to interpersonal issues across laboratories. Depending on the nature of the behavior, it could be a crime, so it is understandable that teachers may become increasingly concerned. Here, we will provide some hints on how to understand and respond to stalking.

Understanding the student:

If a student is engaging in stalking behavior and harassing other students, it may stem from having been rejected or dumped by a former romantic partner or someone they had feelings for.

The following are possible factors in stalking behavior. Firstly, the student may have a strong tendency to cling to their own thoughts and desires. They may be unable to accept being rejected, unilaterally impose their demands, feel their pride has been hurt, harbor resentment towards the other person, and sometimes resort to extreme actions. Next, their interpersonal resources may be scarce. Being rejected or turned down by someone hurts, but if the student has friends who listen to and support them after a breakup, they can probably overcome it on their own even if it's painful. However, for a student who cannot form interpersonal relationships and has few friends, or relies on only one specific person for emotional support, it can be difficult to receive social support, and it may be hard to let go of their attachment to a particular person.

Possible solutions:

First, if you become aware of interpersonal troubles involving students in your laboratory, please make sure to listen carefully to the student on the offending side. If that student has few interpersonal resources and cannot share their hurt with anyone, just having someone listen closely to them a few times might provide the mental support they need to get over their feelings. However, if it becomes clear while listening that the offending student has engaged in unacceptable behavior, please provide educational guidance as necessary. In such cases, rather than one-sidedly telling them to stop because it troubles the other person, it can be more effective to explain that stalking is considered a criminal offense and can lead to prosecution, then advise them to stop because it will be to their disadvantage. If it is judged that the perpetrating student needs psychological counseling or care, introduce them to the Counseling Office.

If the offending student cannot move past their own ideas or desires and refuses to accept guidance, or if the victimized student has already consulted the police, it may be difficult to make decisions or respond alone. In such cases, please consider handling the situation at the departmental level and take appropriate action. If you are unsure how to respond, please consult the Counseling Office.

Q19

**A professor loudly reprimanded a student during guidance,
and the student in question came to consult with me
(an assistant/associate professor),
because they were troubled. What should I do?**

A Laboratories are places where multiple people gather and various things happen daily. Also, assistant professors and associate professors often play the role of mediators between students and professors when students are troubled about issues relating to their relationships with professors. Here, we will consider how to respond to students who come for consultation because they are having trouble with their professor.

Understanding the student:

The reasons for a student consulting with you might not be limited to a single cause; as described below, there can be a combination of at least four factors involved. The first point is the personality of the professor. For example, a professor might have a quick temper, become emotional, and tend to scold students, not only the student in question. The second point is the personality of the student. For example, the student may have a low motivation toward research, have a victimization complex, speak without reading the room, or have interpersonal troubles not only with the professor but with others as well. The third point is the student-teacher relationship. For example, the professor may have particularly high expectations for the student and express dissatisfaction with them over time. Or the student might be dissatisfied with or have expectations regarding the professor's guidance. The fourth point is the environment. When universities, departments, and laboratories are low on resources overall, communication tends to occur only when there is something to be discussed, which can result in an increased likelihood of interpersonal conflicts.

Possible solutions:

First, while keeping in mind the above four factors, it is important to listen carefully to the concerns brought by students who come for consultation. It is advisable to speak calmly, nod or provide occasional interjections appropriately, and listen closely and patiently. By listening in that way and accepting their feelings, such as shock and sadness, the student may calm down. However, simply listening carefully will not ease the student's distress, and if the student is seeking a solution, it is advisable to share information with other staff and consider the response without rushing to a conclusion on the spot. Since it is not easy to suddenly change the personalities of the professors and students, it may be better to focus on their relationship and environmental factors when considering the response. If we focus on relational factors, measures, such as having the instructor whom the student consulted attend the research guidance sessions to act as a mediator, should be considered. Some examples of environmental solutions are creating opportunities for casual communication among laboratory members at regular meetings, fostering an environment where open discussions are possible, and establishing mechanisms for sharing information among staff. If there are no other staff members available, it is acceptable to consult with the department's Counseling Officer, or a nearby faculty or staff member you find easy to talk to, about how to handle the situation. Please feel free to consult the Counseling Office as needed.

Q20

How should we respond to students who complain about being subjected to unrealistic harassment/bullying?

A Whether you are a liaison for academic affairs or a course instructor, you may encounter students who complain about being victimized, whether or not this is the case. You might feel confused or troubled by having to respond to their repeated complaints. To make it a little easier, we will provide a few tips.

Understanding the student:

Consultations from such students can generally be divided into cases where the student is actually being harmed and cases where the student is misconstruing something as a personal attack. In the case of the former, bullying or trouble among students is actually occurring. As for the latter, the recipient may be overly sensitive to others' words and actions, or claim to be a victim even though no actual harm has been done. Especially when the recipient is overly sensitive, it is possible that it is temporary and due to an interpersonal conflict, difficulty progressing with their studies/research, or increased anxiety. It is also possible that continued insomnia due to stress has made it difficult for them to objectively understand the situation. If someone complains of being victimized despite having experienced no actual harm, it may indicate persecutory delusions that are symptoms of the onset of schizophrenia.

Possible solutions:

First, please listen carefully to the student. When doing so, it is preferable to choose a private room or similar space where you can talk calmly, rather than an open area. When listening, it is important to listen to both what is actually happening and the student's feelings. By doing so, the student may be able to process their feelings and calm down.

If actual harm is being experienced, practical measures, such as sharing information with relevant parties like the student's academic advisor and mediating relationships and the social environment, may be necessary according to the student's wishes.

If the student believes that they are being harmed, it is important to understand their mental and physical state and work toward stabilizing it. In such cases, if the stress response is temporarily intensified, it is effective to distance the student from stress factors, such as problematic interpersonal relationships. If the stressful situation is not temporary but persistent, or if physical symptoms have already appeared, it may be necessary to seek medical care. Especially if there is a suspicion of schizophrenia, early consultation and treatment are necessary. If you are unsure about making a judgment or how to recommend a medical consultation, please consult the Student Health Care Center or the Counseling Office.

Q21

What should I do if I have difficulty communicating effectively with international students?

A It may be difficult to communicate with international students who have different cultures and languages. There are various underlying factors, but we recommend the following approaches.

Understanding the student:

Difficulties in communication with international students may stem from issues related to language, cultural differences, and interpersonal relationships. Regarding language issues, when communication takes place in a language that is not the student's native tongue, whether Japanese or English, sometimes communication breaks down due to the student's language proficiency. Regardless of the student's results on tests that measure language proficiency, everyday conversations might not proceed smoothly. Also, from the perspective of cultural differences, what is "natural" for teachers and students who grew up in Japan may not be "natural" for international students. For example, Japanese people tend to try to read others' intentions and situation before acting, but there are many international students who tend to express their own opinions first. Due to such cultural differences, communication with international students can sometimes become difficult. Regarding interpersonal issues, for international students, their academic advisor (instructor) is the person they rely on the most and want to trust, but at the same time, this person is in a position to evaluate them, which makes them reluctant to show their vulnerabilities. As a result, the academic advisor (faculty or staff) often becomes the person students are most careful around, and students tend to feel that they do not want to bother or inconvenience them. Therefore, even when problems become serious, students may not be able to honestly communicate the situation.

Possible solutions:

When you feel that communication with an international student is not going well, please take some time to talk with the student and understand where the problem lies.

If the communication difficulty is due to the student's language ability, it can be effective to assign a TA who teaches Japanese or have a student from the same country accompany them. Also, it might be helpful to convey information using simple Japanese, write down the words on paper, or use diagrams. Furthermore, since living in Japan requires proficiency in Japanese, you might encourage them to continue studying the language. If communication is difficult due to cultural differences, it is important to convey to international students, in words or writing, the activities and rules at universities and laboratories that are considered "normal" by Japanese people. Since international students are not accustomed to the culture of reading the room, please try to convey things clearly and concretely. If the international student is hesitant to consult their advisors out of consideration, it may be good for the advisor to regularly reach out to them. By having faculty and staff take the lead in revitalizing communication with students, the student's resistance to seeking consultation may decrease.

Q22

How should we respond when we receive consultations about interpersonal troubles in club or circle activities?

A When consulting with students about interpersonal troubles in clubs or circles, you may or may not be acting as the student's advisor. If you are not their advisor, it may be difficult to ascertain the situation within the club or circle, making it challenging to decide how involved you should be. Therefore, here we will assume you are consulting in a position other than that of an advisor.

Understanding the student:

Interpersonal troubles in clubs or circles can develop from differences in motivation, burden of roles, strictness of rules, romantic entanglements, and so on. For example, the student may have been entrusted with heavy responsibilities, spoken to harshly by senior students, or broken up with a partner only to repeatedly receive messages asking to get back together. Such issues are sometimes influenced not only by the individual's personality but also the way the club or circle is managed. University clubs and circles differ from those in junior high and high school in that mainly the students manage decisions about practices, game and presentation schedules, and the management of club fees. Also, the advisor for these matters may not necessarily have a complete understanding of everything. Because of that, problems among club members can unexpectedly escalate.

Interpersonal trouble in clubs or circles can cause loss of focus on studies or absences from school. It may also cause mental and physical health problems such as insomnia, loss of appetite, and depression.

Possible solutions:

When providing consultation about interpersonal trouble in club activities or circles, it is important to first listen carefully to the student. While listening to the circumstances and background of the problem and processing the situation, you may sometimes feel that the student is also at fault, but responding with empathy to their feelings lead to their making better judgments and subsequently growing.

However, if the student is experiencing physical or mental health problems such as insomnia or depression, please recommend they use the Student Health Care Center or the Counseling Office.

It may be appropriate to encourage students to consult with the club or circle advisor and the Student Support Division if it is necessary not only to mediate relationships between the parties involved but also those within the club or circle overall, or when it's necessary to consider the future activities and management of the club or circle. If the student finds it difficult to do this, faculty or staff members should contact the relevant parties as needed.

If you are unsure what to do, please contact the Counseling Office. We will help you to understand and respond to the issue.

Q23

How should I respond if a student I am advising consults me about dormitory related issues?

A Our university has housing where only Japanese students reside and University House dormitories where Japanese and international students live together. As an advisor, you may sometimes receive consultations from students about issues at the dormitory, such as noise from the neighboring room or the use of common kitchens. Here, we will provide some tips.

Understanding the student:

It is not uncommon for trouble to occur in the dormitories as Japanese students may be new to dormitory life and international students may not be used to life in Japan. Consultations from students regarding dorm life generally fall into the following two categories.

First, there are cases in which no discussion has taken place between the parties involved. They may find it difficult to directly address the issue or have a discussion, due to concerns about worsening relations with their neighbors. In the case of international students, sometimes communication does not go well due to the language barrier.

Second, there are cases in which the parties involved have discussed the problem but it has not improved. It is possible that the people involved do not understand each other, or they understand but cannot reach an agreement. In the case of international students, communication may be insufficient due to language constraints, and they may take different rules and manners for granted due to their cultural background.

Possible solutions:

First, please listen carefully to what the student has to say. By listening to them talk not only about the problem but also other concerns or anxieties the student may have, the student can organize their thoughts and feelings on their situation.

If no discussion has been held between the parties involved, you will need to consider what specific issues to discuss and how to arrange a meeting. If the issue involves international students who do not understand Japanese well, it is desirable to have a student or staff member who can interpret present.

If the problem does not improve even after discussions, you and the student will need to consider whether to continue holding discussions or seek other solutions. In the former case, new approaches should be considered based on the progress of the previous discussions. In the latter case, the main option will be to change the room or dormitory of one of the students involved. If the student wishes to, please encourage them to consult the Student Services Division.

Q24

How should we respond if a student consults us about being stalked off campus?

A When you are consulted about stalking or sexual victimization, you may feel shaken and unsure how to handle. First, it's important to take plenty of time and start by listening to the student. In some cases, practical measures may also be necessary. Here, we will provide some advice.

Stalking behavior is very dangerous as it can escalate to acts such as physical or sexual assault, and it is a crime in Japan as defined under the "The Law on Proscribing Stalking Behavior and Assisting Victims, etc.", commonly known as the "Anti-Stalking Act."

Understanding the student:

Coming for a consultation despite harboring great anxiety requires courage on the part of the student. They may be experiencing fear of the acts committed against them and of the perpetrator, while feeling powerless to do anything about it themselves. The stalker may be a former romantic partner, someone met through social media, or a complete stranger. Additionally, stalking behavior includes not only following or lurking, but also continuously sending messages on social media, posting defamatory comments, and using GPS devices to determine the victim's location. The student probably fears being subjected to such actions. This fear is often expressed in various forms such as irritation, sadness, and anger. On the other hand, sometimes those feelings are not expressed at all. Some students might calmly explain the incident, but that does not mean they are free from feelings of fear. They might also feel self-blame, thinking they might be at fault, as well as embarrassment or similar emotions.

Possible solutions:

Considering that the student may have struggled alone for days without being able to consult anyone, please start by saying something like, "I'm glad you came to talk. It must have been tough," to acknowledge and comfort them. To ensure that they feel safe, first listen to them without denying/questioning what they say. Next, we recommend asking what is troubling or frightening the student, then discussing what can be done to protect their safety, peace of mind, and life. Please keep in contact with the student and, if necessary, encourage them to consult their parents or the police. Also, it is important not to end after just one consultation, but to continue the dialog until the situation is resolved. When receiving such consultations, it is necessary to share information among related personnel, such as administrative staff and supervisors, and consider countermeasures together. If you are unsure how to respond, please make use of the Counseling Office as well.

Q25

How should we respond to complaints from students about treatment they received at administrative offices, e.g. at the Educational Affairs Division?

A The administrative offices receive various inquiries from internal faculty and staff, students, students' families, related external organizations, and other concerned parties. Some inquiries are very welcome, while others may be difficult to handle. Among them, dealing with complaints is particularly challenging. Here, let's consider what to do if a student contacts the help desk with a complaint about a teacher.

Understanding the student:

There is no uniform way to express complaints. They can be conveyed in various ways. For example, some students calmly point out issues and areas for improvement regarding the staff's conduct, while others may yell emotionally, glare silently, or cry inconsolably. Also, some students speak in a faint, barely audible voice, and it becomes clear that they are dissatisfied with a certain teacher only after a while.

Unless the statements are incoherent and you suspect a pathological condition, the complaint should not be seen as an attempt to trouble you (the staff on duty), but rather as an indication that the student is under mental strain and sending out an SOS. However, if you mishandle your response, their anger may be directed at the nearest scapegoat (you), so careful handling is required.

Possible solutions:

Start by calmly listening to what they have to say. If you become emotional, there is a high possibility that the situation will get out of control, so make sure to devise ways to listen calmly. For example, some approaches might be to responding with help from multiple people instead of just yourself, not trying to conclude the issue in one conversation, and asking the student to explain the problem over several sessions, are some approaches.

Also, if asked to judge whether "the teacher was at fault," it is better to avoid definitive statements while showing empathy for the student's feelings, since the student's explanation cannot necessarily be considered objective fact. If a complaint is received by email, it is better to talk in person because communication via email is prone to misunderstandings. If it is determined that a response to the complaint is necessary, respond after carefully considering how to handle the relevant parties. In any case, it is likely that the person in charge of handling the complaint will experience significant mental fatigue. We recommend not facing the problem alone, but sharing information throughout the workplace and dividing roles among a team in order to distribute the practical and mental burden.

(4) Psychological issues**Q26 How should we deal with students whom we think should consult counseling services, but are unwilling to do so?**

A According to the "Report of the 2021 Tohoku University Student Survey: Life of Tohoku University Students", 17.4% of undergraduate students (about one in six), 15.5% of master's students (about one in seven), and 11.7% of doctoral students (about one in nine) have used the Counseling Office at Kawauchi-kita Campus. Thus, while a relatively large number of students use counseling services, there are likely also many who find it difficult to seek help. Here, we will discuss how to understand and respond to such students.

Understanding the student:

Even if faculty and staff want students to seek counseling, there are three possible reasons why they may not do so.

First, some may have had few difficulties in their school life so far and never needed to consult with anyone. Many students think that the Counseling Office is a place for people who have mental illness or "serious" problems, and don't think it is appropriate to seek counseling for their own concerns.

Next, some don't understand what is causing their problem, and even if they try to talk about it, they don't know where to start. Often, they believe that since it is a matter of their own "motivation" or "personality," they must solve it by themselves.

Finally, in some cases the student's physical and mental energy is depleted, and they don't even feel like talking to others. In such cases, the presence of lifestyle disruptions, such as disturbed sleep rhythms, is not uncommon.

Possible solutions:

You may consider the following approaches for students who need but do not seek counseling. First, please tell them that many students use the Counseling Office, they should feel free to use it when they feel troubled, and that consultations are kept confidential. It is also a good idea to encourage them to write down what they are currently struggling with in order to organize their thoughts.

If you have a good relationship with the student, you might offer to attend the first consultation together. For example, ask: "Shall we try going to a consultation together?"

If the person is severely physically and mentally exhausted and unable to move, you might consider waiting for them to recover and observe their condition for a while. The Counseling Office's homepage has pamphlets on problems students often face, such as stress and lack motivation. It might be good to first encourage them to browse through these.

If the student is considering taking a leave of absence, please inform them that the Counseling Office remains available during their leave, so they can get counseling there whenever they feel the need.

Q27 What should we do about students who struggle with speaking in front of others or participating in group discussions?

A In classes or research guidance, you may encounter students who get nervous and cannot speak well in front of others, make comments that don't fit the flow of the conversation, or talk one-sidedly at length during discussions. Here, I would like to offer some hints on understanding and responding to such students.

Understanding the student:

Students who are not good at speaking in front of others sometimes feel anxious about interacting with people, or they may worry about how they will be evaluated academically or fear failure, which leads to difficulties speaking well. Some students avoid attending class altogether to escape situations where they have to present.

For students who are not good at group discussions, developmental disorders, particularly Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), may be influencing factors. Here, "developmental disorder" refers to various congenital brain function disorders. ASD is characterized by two main features: difficulties in interpersonal relationships and restricted interests, concerns, and behaviors. Students with these tendencies find it difficult to understand others' intentions and struggle with behavior appropriate to the situation. The characteristics of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Students with these tendencies often talk excessively during discussions or interrupt others.

Possible solutions:

If the student feels strong interpersonal anxiety, it would be good to first discuss the situations they struggle with and what makes them difficult. In addition, it is important to talk about what the student feels capable of doing. Through such discussions, the student is more likely to feel a sense of security and be more prepared to present.

In cases where you think a developmental disorder is having an impact, make the framework as clear as possible, as these students may have difficulty being flexible during communication. For example, it is good to clearly communicate the theme of the discussion, the time limit, and the rules for speaking. In laboratories or seminars, it is effective for the teacher to take on a facilitator role, such as steering the conversation back when it goes off track or when a student is speaking one-sidedly, or dividing the discussion. If a student requests reasonable accommodation, such as substituting a discussion with another assignment or giving their presentation in front of just the teacher, please respond accordingly.

If students are having trouble earning credits due to presentations or discussions, please encourage them to contact the Counseling Office or the Disability Services Office. Also, if you are having difficulty dealing with students yourself, please contact us. For more on students with developmental disabilities, please refer to the faculty and staff guide "Support for Students with Developmental Disabilities" posted on our website.

Q28 How should we respond to student problems caused by prolonged job hunting due to difficulties with securing job offers?

A While providing research guidance on graduation or completion, you may also become concerned about student job hunting activities. Here, we offer some insights on understanding and supporting students who struggle with job hunting.

Understanding the student:

In recent years, job hunting tends to be prolonged due to the increase in internships and other factors. If a student wishes to work for a private company, their schedule includes internships starting over a year before the end of their undergraduate or graduate program, company information sessions, submission of entry sheets, and selection interviews. Therefore, students commonly engage in job hunting activities for more than a year while concurrently managing academic work.

While there are students who actively take the initiative in job hunting, there are also those who find it difficult to start by themselves, resulting in prolonged job hunting. If the job-hunting process drags on, students become increasingly anxious and impatient, leading to both physical and mental stress.

Factors that cause difficulties in job hunting include initial uncertainty about career paths, insufficient self-analysis or recruitment exam preparation, and strong aversion to interviews, all of which require countermeasures. It is also necessary to balance job hunting with research and thesis writing.

Possible solutions:

First, if a student's job-hunting process becomes prolonged and they appear to be making little progress in their research, it is necessary to reach out to them, listen to their difficulties and concerns, and create an environment where they can engage in job hunting and research with peace of mind.

If the student is not prepared for employment, it can be quite difficult to work on self-analysis, information gathering, written exams, and interview preparation alone, so we recommend they use on-campus services such as the Career Support Office, which specializes in assisting with job hunting.

Many students struggle to balance research, thesis writing, and job hunting. By receiving concrete support from their research or thesis advisors, some students can balance these and engage in job hunting activities as well. On the other hand, if the student is experiencing severe depression, it may be difficult to handle job hunting and research activities simultaneously. In such cases, it would be good to discuss the student's outlook on graduation and employment, including options such as taking a temporary break, with the understanding of their parents, or completing their research activities first and conducting job hunting after graduation.

Q29 What should we do if a student appears to be ill or unfocused in class?

A During class, you might notice a student whose facial color is unusual, eyes appear vacant, or expression, attitude, or behavior is worrying. In some cases, these could indicate a serious illness. How should you understand and respond to such students? Here, we will provide some hints on this.

Understanding the student:

In such cases, you may first suspect a physical illness (such as anemia or liver/kidney diseases). Depending on the illness, their complexion might become pale or yellowish, or darken. However, even simple fatigue or lack of sleep can cause poor blood circulation in the face, making it look dull, and lack of energy can cause the eyes to appear vacant.

However, even in cases of fatigue or lack of sleep, there may be an underlying mental illness such as depression. The phenomenon of stress manifesting physically, called somatization, often appears in a wide variety of forms. Examples are headaches, nausea, inability to sleep, loss of appetite, lack of motivation, and mental sluggishness. The causes of stress for university students include a wide range of factors such as academics, job hunting, human relationships, romance, and part-time jobs.

Possible solutions:

First you could try saying things like, "You don't look well. Are you okay?", "You seem to be unwell. What's wrong?", or "Is there something troubling you?"

When a student complains of physical discomfort, please recommend that they visit a medical institution or the Student Health Care Center. If it is determined that immediate action is necessary, please contact the Educational Affairs Division to consider appropriate measures.

If the cause of the physical discomfort is psychological, please take time to listen to the student, if possible, after class or at another suitable time. A closed space might be better than a classroom with other students present, as it may be easier for the student to talk. It is important to listen carefully without rejecting what they are saying and to accept it politely. For example, even if the student answers, "I'm simply sleep-deprived because I've been gaming or surfing the Internet," this is often due to underlying stress from which gaming or Internet surfing serves as an escape. Therefore, saying something like, "If you're facing any problems, feel free to talk to me," or "If your poor health continues, it might be a good idea to see a doctor," can be very effective. If you observe the student for a while and the worrying condition continues, we advise you strongly encourage the student to see a medical professional.

Q30

What should we do if a student is overloaded by club or circle activities?

A It is not unusual to encounter students who are overloaded with club or circle activities and find it difficult to balance them with their studies. Sometimes, there are students who develop mental health issues as a result, which can cause concern among faculty and staff. How should we understand and respond to such students? Here, we will provide some hints.

Understanding the student:

Many students participate in clubs and extracurricular activities to make friends, immerse themselves in hobbies or interests, and make their resumes more attractive to employers. However, depending on the club or activity, practice and events may take up a considerable amount of time. In particularly dedicated clubs or circles, there can be daily practices or activities that make it difficult to spend time with friends, and if there are other things they want to do like class assignments, research activities, part-time jobs, job hunting, or studying abroad, they may become overwhelmed and physically exhausted. Basically, a student's primary responsibility is their studies, so they should avoid allowing participation in clubs or extracurricular activities to interfere with that. Students should also choose clubs or circles according to their own capacity, but there are many things to learn from actually participating in them. Some students may choose clubs or circles that do not match their schedules and find themselves overloaded. In some cases, physical symptoms such as decreased motivation, difficulty waking up in the morning, not being able to eat, or insomnia may appear, leading to absenteeism or social withdrawal.

Possible solutions:

If a student is overburdened with clubs and extracurricular activities, you should work towards reducing that burden. If you suggest this you can expect the student to respond that they are worried about what the other club members will think, they can't skip practices and activities, or that they can't get someone else to take over their club duties. In such cases, we recommend showing understanding of their feelings while persistently emphasizing the importance of balancing academics and club activities. Depending on the situation, sharing information with advisors, club or circle leaders, etc., or thinking together about how the student can successfully communicate with other members may be effective. If the problem is serious and significantly affecting their studies, it is advisable to recommend counseling. Many students can get their lives back on track and focus on their studies by resolving their issues with their clubs or circles, so it is important to listen sincerely to those concerns.

Q31

A male student in the laboratory seemed down, so I tried talking to him. He said that he does not feel like himself living as a man, and wants to live as a woman. What should I do?

A Opportunities to engage with LGBTQ+ or Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) issues, and actually meet students with SOGI issues, will likely increase in the future. Here, we will share some ideas on basic understanding and responses.

Understanding the student:

LGBTQ+, the abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer (people exploring their gender or sexual orientation, etc.), and plus "+" to represent other diverse gender identities, is a collective term for diverse sexual identities. In the case of the student in the question above, although their biological sex is male, their gender identity is female, indicating a high possibility that they are transgender, meaning their biological sex and experienced gender differ. Being transgendered is related to gender identity, whereas lesbian, gay, and bisexual are sexual orientations.

Common concerns that transgender students face in their school life include, for example, the use of a preferred name for enrollment, gender notation, room assignments for training or camps, and issues regarding future paths (such as which gender to present when job hunting). Other concerns include changing the name on their family register and matters related to hormone therapy and gender affirmation surgery. In addition to these, difficulties in interpersonal relationships and issues such as coming out to family and friends can intricately intertwine, leading to psychological distress. Students who have such concerns often find it difficult to talk about them with anyone.

Possible solutions:

When a student opens up about their problems, it suggests they have some trust in you, so it is important to express gratitude for that. For example, you can convey your appreciation by saying, "Thank you for sharing that." When familiar faculty and staff are receptive, students feel more secure.

On that basis, if students have any requests regarding academic accommodations, let's think about them together. We have already implemented measures such as the use of preferred names, gender designations, and individual arrangements for health checkups. It is important that you grasp this information and convey it to the students.

Also, if it is necessary to share information with other faculty and staff to fulfill the student's requests, please confirm with the student in advance about who can be told and to what extent. Outing students without their permission is never allowed. If a student wants to come out to other members of the laboratory, please consider the appropriate scope and timing for doing so together.

If there are psychological or interpersonal problems, please encourage the student to visit the Counseling Office. If faculty or staff feel uncertain or uneasy about working with the student and/or approaching other students in your lab, please consult the Counseling Office.

Q32

How should we deal with a student who expresses suicidal thoughts?

A It is natural to feel upset if a student hints at committing suicide. Although few in number, there are always some students who have suicidal thoughts or desires. It is important not to ignore this problem just because it is rare, but rather to be prepared to respond if necessary.

Understanding the student:

Situations in which a student seems to be hinting at suicide can be roughly divided into cases where you directly observe this behavior and cases where you learn about it indirectly from others. Examples of the former include conversations or emails in which the student expresses such feelings, or messages written on the margins of tests etc. stating a desire to die. Examples of the latter include receiving a notification from a student who heard another student (a member of the same laboratory or classmate etc.) say they want to die, or found a post by another student about wanting to die on social media. In any case, if someone is in complete despair, they may already intend to commit suicide, so the act of hinting at it can be seen as a message from the student asking for help. Such cries for help are often sent in a way that is difficult for those around them and their few close friends to notice, such as in the margins of a test.

Possible solutions:

If a student sends such an SOS specifically to you, even if you're not sure if it's serious, do NOT adopt a wait and see approach. Instead, respond under the assumption that they have reached out only to you and might take action. Specifically, first contact the student in question, set up meeting as soon as possible, and listen to them directly. If someone else contacts you about the student, it is important to pay attention to the relationship between the person who conveyed the message and the person who is considering suicide. When listening to the student, listen carefully and honestly to understand their thoughts and feelings. Trying to use logical arguments or persuasion can make the student feel cornered and have the opposite of the desired effect, so please refrain from them. Just listening to the student may calm them, but since feelings can fluctuate, we recommend not ending with just one meeting and setting a date for the next meeting.

If the student appears to be in intense distress or is considering specific methods of suicide, it must be treated as an urgent emergency. Please explain this to the student and consider contacting their guardians. In such cases, it may be appropriate to recommend that the student's guardians take them to a medical institution. Do not try to handle the situation alone; please also get in touch with your department's student support personnel, the Student Health Care Center, the Counseling Office, etc., and seek their cooperation.

Q33

How should we deal with students who engage in self-harm (such as cutting or overdosing)?

A According to a survey, 1 in 10 people have engaged in self-harm, so it is not uncommon to encounter students who engage in it in some form. For example, students may cut their wrists or arms, hit their heads against walls when irritated, or overdose and require emergency transportation. When encountering students who engage in self-harm, you may feel unsure about how to help them. Here, we will provide some hints.

Understanding the student:

There are several types of self-harming behavior. For example, cutting, stabbing, or burning oneself, or overdosing on medication etc. Two main factors may be involved. One may be a painful past experience. This includes, for example, childhood abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, psychological abuse) and bullying. Another factor could be a recent distressing event. Examples are problems with friends, heartbreak, and their parents' divorce or remarriage. Stress related to schooling and interpersonal stress in the research lab may be added to these, and self-harm may occur as a means of escape. For the individual, self-harm has a positive meaning in that it temporarily alleviates emotional distress, but when it becomes habitual, their coping strategy for stress becomes limited to self-harm, which in some cases can lead to death.

Possible solutions:

Just because a student is engaging in self-harm it may not be appropriate, without first adequately listening to the student's account, to immediately refer them to a medical institution, contact their guardians and send them back home, or have them take a leave of absence. If you learn that a student is engaging in self-harm, you may be very surprised, but it is important not to immediately change the subject, casually reassure them by saying "It'll be okay" etc., or unilaterally instruct them to stop. If a student confides that they are harming themselves, it means they trust you. You should acknowledge that the student was able to say "I am self-harming" and send out an SOS, and to listen carefully to them. If medical treatment is necessary, including wound care, it would be good to make appointments at the Student Health Care Center or a medical institution on behalf of the student, accompany them if necessary, and contact their guardians as needed. Moreover, for psychological support, we advise connecting the student with specialized institutions such as psychiatric clinics or Counseling Offices, coordinating with these specialized agencies, and making decisions on whether the student can continue their studies or needs to take a rest. Even if the student is able to talk to someone and receive medical care or counseling, it may be difficult to immediately stop the self-harming behavior, but it is important that those around them persistently provide support.

Q34 A laboratory/seminar student suddenly died by suicide or accident.

How should we help the other students process this?

A If a student belonging to your laboratory or seminar suddenly passes away, the other members, including faculty and staff, will likely be deeply affected. Especially any who were present at the time of the student's passing, close friends, classmates, or those who were working closely with them on research may experience significant physical and mental distress. When the death is by suicide, the impact on the other members is likely to be significant. Here, we will indicate key points for helping them.

Understanding the student:

Manifestations of psychological shock vary from person to person, influenced by circumstances at the time of the student's death and their relationship with them. For example, when a student dies in an accident, psychological effects may include emotional numbness, decreased motivation and concentration, and feelings of depression. Physically, issues such as insomnia, loss of appetite, and fatigue may occur, and behaviorally, there may be excessive drinking, avoidance of things that remind them of the student, hyperactivity, or withdrawal. In cases of suicide, in addition to these, there may be an obsessive preoccupation with the student's reasons, as well as feelings of self-blame, wondering if one was responsible or could have prevented it. All of these are normal reactions that can occur when a close person has passed away but tend to subside over time. However, if these reactions interfere with daily life or persist for a long time, support from a specialist is necessary.

Possible solutions:

Not only the students in the research laboratory/seminar but also the faculty and staff are affected by such sudden events, and physical and mental reactions similar to the above may occur. First, try to calm yourself even if only a little. It is important to have teachers and staff hold discussions to process the information and situation, and to share their feelings. Please also observe the students' conditions and engage with them individually.

Providing appropriate care to the bereaved and related parties to minimize psychological impact is called "postvention." In postvention, we share the facts of what happened, explain possible reactions of those left behind, share each other's feelings, and provide care for those who are strongly affected. If you think it is necessary, please consult the Counseling Office.

Although these measures are expected to gradually calm the situation in the laboratory or seminar, if faculty and staff notice any students they are concerned about, please also consult the Counseling Office.

List of Service Desks

(1) List of on-campus Service Desks

Service Desks at Kawauchi Kita Campus

Student Services Division (Desk Number① to ④)	Support Planning Section (Desk Number①): Issues related to student life TEL 022-795-7818 MAIL sta-gaku@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
	Activities Support Section (Desk Number②): Issues related to extracurricular activities TEL 022-795-3983 MAIL sta-kagai@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
	Life Support Section (Desk Number③): Issues related to University House, Tohoku University International House, and dormitories TEL 022-795-3943 MAIL sta-ryo@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
	Financial Support Section (Desk Number④): Issues related to exemption from admission and tuition fees / Scholarships TEL 022-795-7816 MAIL shogaku@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
Educational Affairs Division (Desk Number ⑤)	General Education Implementation Section: Issues related to classes for general education classes TEL 022-795-7558 TEL 022-795-7562 MAIL kyom-j@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
Student Exchange Division (Desk Number ⑥)	International Education Section: Issues related to acceptance of foreign students and scholarships, etc. TEL 022-795-7817 MAIL sed2@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
	Incoming Student Exchange Section: Issues related to the acceptance of exchange students, etc. TEL 022-795-3745 MAIL studyab@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
	Global Programs Section: Issues regarding student dispatch and exchange study, etc. TEL 022-795-7820 MAIL sab_query@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
International Support Center(ISC) (Desk Number ⑦)	Issues related to residence status and private apartment housing guarantees TEL 022-795-7834 MAIL supportoffice@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
Canter for Career Support and Social Contribution(CCS), Career Support Office (Desk Number ⑧)	Issues related to career paths and employment TEL 022-795-7770 MAIL career-jimu@grp.tohoku.ac.jp
Student Health Care Center	Health consultations, medical treatment, and health examinations TEL 022-795-7836(Office),022-795-7829(Medical Clinic)
Center for Counseling and Disability Services	Counseling Office: Psychological counseling related to student life and academic matters TEL 022-795-7833 MAIL gakuso@ihe.tohoku.ac.jp (Reception)
	Disability Services Office: Issues related to support and reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities TEL 022-795-7696 MAIL t-sien@ihe.tohoku.ac.jp (Reception)

Departmental Educational Affairs Offices and others

Department	Section	Contact Information	Location
Graduate School Faculty of Arts and Letters	Academic Affairs Section	022-795-6004	Kawauchi Minami Campus 2nd Floor, Graduate School of Arts and Letters Building,
Graduate School of Education/Faculty of Education	Academic Affairs Section	022-795-6105	Kawauchi Minami Campus 3rd Floor, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Building
Graduate School/Faculty of Law	Academic Affairs Section (Undergraduate / Graduate Schools)	022-795-6175	Kawauchi Minami Campus 3rd Floor, New Humanities Building
	Professional Graduate Schools (Law School) (School of Public policy)	022-217-4945	Katahira Campus 5th Floor, Extended Education and Research Building
Graduate School of Economics and Management/Faculty of Economics	Academic Affairs Office, Undergraduate Affairs Section	022-795-6265	Kawauchi Minami Campus 2nd Floor, Graduate School of Economics & Management Building
	Academic Affairs Office, Graduate Affairs Section	022-795-6263	Kawauchi Minami Campus 2nd Floor, Graduate School of Economics & Management Building
	Katahira Office	022-217-6276	Katahira Campus 1st Floor, Accounting School Research Building
Graduate School of Science/Faculty of Science	Academic Affairs Division, Undergraduate Academic Affairs Section	022-795-6350	Aobayama Kita Campus 2nd Floor, Science Administration Center
	Academic Affairs Division, Graduate Academic Affairs Section	022-795-6351	
	Academic Affairs Division, Student Support Section	022-795-6403	
Graduate School of Medicine/School of Medicine	Academic Affairs Division, Undergraduate Academic Affairs Section	022-717-8009	Seiryō Campus 2nd Floor, School of Medicine Building 1
	Academic Affairs Division, Graduate Academic Affairs Section	022-717-8010	
	Academic Affairs Division, Academic Affairs Section (School of Health Science)	022-717-7905	
Graduate School of Dentistry and School of Dentistry	Academic Affairs Section	022-717-8248	Seiryō Campus 1st Floor, Building for Clinical Dental Science (Building C)
Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences/Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences	Academic Affairs Section	022-795-6803	Aobayama Kita Campus 1st Floor, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Building APharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Department	Section	Contact Information	Location
Graduate School of Engineering/School of Engineering	Academic Affairs Division, Undergraduate Academic Affairs Section	022-795-5818	Aobayama Higashi Campus 3rd Floor, School of Engineering CENTER HALL
	Academic Affairs Division, Graduate Academic Affairs Section	022-795-5820	
	Academic Affairs Division, Student Support	022-795-5822	
	Academic Affairs Division, International Affairs Section	022-795-5817	
Graduate School of Agricultural Science/Faculty of Agriculture	Academic Affairs Section	022-757-4007	Aobayama Shin Campus 1st Floor, Multidisciplinary Research Laboratory for Agricultural Science
Graduate School of International Cultural Studies	Academic Affairs Section	022-795-7556	Kawauchi Kita Campus 2nd Floor, Graduate International Cultural Studies Building
Graduate School of Information Sciences	Academic Affairs Section	022-795-5814	Aobayama Kita Campus 1st Floor, Graduate School of Information Sciences
Graduate School of Life Sciences	Academic Affairs Section	022-217-5706	Katahira Campus 1st Floor, Life Sciences Project Research Laboratory
Graduate School of Environmental Studies	Academic Affairs Section	022-752-2235	Aobayama Shin Campus 2nd Floor, Graduate School of Environmental Studies Building
Graduate School of Biomedical Engineering	Academic Affairs Section	022-795-4824	Aobayama Higashi Campus 2nd Floor, School of Engineering/ Graduate School of Biomedical Engineering Building

● Departmental Support Desks

There are also support desks at each department. Please visit the websites of each faculty and graduate school of Tohoku University for more information.

(2) List of off-campus service desks

● Consultations regarding schizophrenia, depression, stress-related symptoms, etc.

Hospitals with departments including psychiatry	Tohoku University Hospital	TEL 022-717-7000
	Tohoku Fukushi University Sendan Hospital	TEL 022-303-0125
	Miyagi Psychiatric Center	TEL 022-384-2236
	Tohoku-kai Hospital	TEL 022-234-0461
	Kunimidai Hospital	TEL 022-234-5251
	Sendai Medical Center	TEL 022-293-1111
	Sendai City Hospital	TEL 022-308-7111

* For medical institutions in Sendai City, please check the Sendai City website.

● Support regarding issues with purchase/sale contracts, credit cards, etc.

Consumer Life Consultation	Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center	TEL 022-211-3123
	Sendai City Consumer Affairs Center	TEL 022-268-7867

● Suicide prevention hotline

Lifeline Suicide Prevention Center	Sendai Inochinodenwa (Japanese Only)	TEL 022-718-4343
	Sendai Kokoronokizuna Center (Japanese Only)	TEL 022-225-5560

● Consultation for victims of crime and related issues

Police	Miyagi Prefectural Police	TEL 022-266-9110
	Sendai Chuo Police Station	TEL 022-222-7171

● Consultation on debt, financial trouble, legal issues, etc.

Legal Consultation	Miyagi Legal Support Center (Hō Terrace)	TEL 0570-078374
	Sendai Bar Association Support Center	TEL 022-223-2383

(3) About the Center for Counseling and Disability Services

User's Guide

The Center for Counseling and Disability Services is a university-wide consultation service that handles various student inquiries. If faculty or staff have concerns about students, they are asked to please encourage those students to visit the center. We also provide consultations for faculty and staff on understanding and responding to students.

Faculty and staff may sometimes have to interact with students whose behavior is concerning or difficult to handle during classes, research supervision, or office hours. If you are unsure how to deal with such situations, please make use of the Counseling Office. If you have difficulties dealing with students with disabilities, please make use of the Disability Services Office. We will work together to think about better responses and support for students and provide advice as needed.

For personal consultations for faculty and staff, please use the staff counseling hotline (022-217-4967).

As a rule, consultations are by appointment only. Please either visit the Counseling Office or the Disability Services Office directly or contact us by phone or email to make an appointment. For details on office hours etc. please refer to our website (<https://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/>).



Counseling Office

TEL 022-795-7833

FAX 022-795-3861

gakuso@ihe.tohoku.ac.jp

Disability Services Office

TEL 022-795-7696

FAX 022-795-4950

t-sien@ihe.tohoku.ac.jp

Published in October 2025

Student Support Guidebook for Faculty and Staff

Edit/Publish Center for Counseling and Disability Services,
Tohoku University

Address 41 Kawauchi, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi, 980-8576
TEL 022-795-7833 (Counseling Office)
022-795-7696 (Disability Services Office)

<https://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp>

Printed ABESHIKOH CO.,LTD