

Early intervention model for  
students of JAMK: mental  
health and substance abuse  
problems

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## Introduction

Taking care of and promoting the well-being of the academic community is the responsibility of every member of the community, which includes both students and staff. JAMK's model for early intervention describes the measures for preventing and identifying problems as well as bringing up concerns and steering the affected student to the right place to receive support.

JAMK University of Applied Sciences follows the *principles of accessibility and early intervention* in studies. The principle of accessibility means that students are able to study equally regardless of physical, mental and social obstacles and that students can receive the type of support that their situation warrants. The principle of early intervention means the ability to actively bring up subjects that cause concerns. The aim of the model for early intervention is to support the student's study ability, promote the well-being and health of students, promote the early identification of mental health and substance abuse problems, make it easier to intervene in problems and improve referral to treatment. The aim is to strengthen the mental health and intoxicant-free life of students and to promote a sense of community and responsible intoxicant culture at the university.

According to the Finnish Student Health Survey conducted by FSHS (2016), 30% of university students suffer from mental health problems. The most common problems are a constant feeling of overexertion, feelings of unhappiness and depression, difficulties in concentrating on tasks and sleeplessness due to anxiety. According to the mental health screening conducted as part of the survey, over a third of students felt highly stressed out, most often due to challenges related to performing in front of a crowd and difficulties in keeping up with studies. Additionally, just over 25% of students feel that their mood, plans for the future, resources and abilities are inadequate.

The Finnish Student Health Survey (2016) found that approximately one in ten students abstains completely from intoxicating substances. The majority of students consume alcohol in moderation, and the consumption of alcohol has been decreasing among male students since 2008. One fifth of students have tried or used drugs, medication or a combination thereof with alcohol for the purpose of intoxication. A large share of students use intoxicating substances in moderation, but there are also those who may develop substance abuse problems unless the matter is addressed in time.

According to the Finnish Student Health Survey (2016), 25% of students feel that their studies have been hindered by time spent online, and 23% feel that time spent online has had a negative impact on their daily rhythm. Approximately one in ten students felt that they needed help in reducing their Internet use. Students spend more time on gaming, social media and shopping than on studies and working on the Internet.

## Prevention of mental health and substance abuse problems

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community (WHO 2013). The study ability means a student's work ability. The study ability consists of the student's health and resources, study skills, study environment and teaching and guidance activities (Kunttu, K., 2005.) A student's

study ability and overall well-being can be promoted and supported by influencing these factors. The study ability is about balance and the maintenance thereof. The study ability of an individual student changes and varies throughout the course of their studies. JAMK University of Applied Sciences aims at promoting and ensuring the well-being and study ability of students as well as a safe and healthy study environment for everyone.

JAMK has committed to maintaining an intoxicant-free study environment and fostering a responsible intoxicant culture. This commitment applies to all operations on JAMK campuses, learning situations and learning environments. Our shared goal is to promote the solidarity and participation of students and an atmosphere of caring that strengthens a sense of security and prevents social exclusion. The Student Union of JAMK University of Applied Sciences organises intoxicant-free activities and events for students.

JAMK has adopted a model for early intervention. The model for early intervention reflects the idea that we all have a shared responsibility to take care of one another. The aim of the model is to prevent problems before they develop and to serve as a low-threshold way of intervening in situations. Communicating about the model for early intervention is the university's shared duty and students should be aware of it from the very start of their studies. At JAMK University of Applied Sciences, every student has a designated *career tutor*, who has a study-related steering discussion with the student once every academic year. Additionally, every unit at JAMK has a *study counsellor*. The career tutor and the study counsellor are key individuals who also serve as low-threshold contacts for students to discuss mental health and intoxicant use with. Furthermore, students can utilise the services of the *study psychologist*, the *school pastor* and *student health care*. Parties carrying out prevention work include JAMK's guidance staff, the student well-being group HyPe Team, the Student Union of JAMK University of Applied Sciences and student health care. JAMK's aim is to ensure that its guidance staff is competent in supporting the well-being and study ability of students and in identifying challenges and addressing them.

## Identification of mental health and substance abuse problems

A mental health problem means a condition in which an individual's mood, thoughts or behaviour hinder their ability to function or their relationships or cause suffering. On the other hand, mental health is not just well-being or the absence of problems. Sadness and disappointments, fears, anxiety and occasional problems in falling asleep are all part of life. Providing a precise definition of mental health problems is difficult, and the same difficulty also applies to identifying mental health problems. The situation is complicated further by the fact that the individual does not always understand their own situation. (Duodecim 2017.) Mental health problems in students manifest in many ways, such as in the form of lethargy, tiredness, difficulties in concentrating or making decisions, absences, restlessness, sleeping problems, the pursuit of perfection or withdrawal from social situations.

Substance abuse problems are about addiction. This addiction can be to any substance, thing or activity pursued for the purpose of quick gratification and satisfaction. Addiction narrows and restricts life and has an impact on relationships and the study ability. (Nuorten mielenterveystalo 2018.) Alcohol and drug addiction are characterised by the continuous, repeated or compulsive consumption of an intoxicating substance regardless of its negative social and health impacts. In Finland, the most common intoxicants are alcohol and tobacco. The most common drugs are cannabis (marijuana and hashish), heroin and other opiates, cocaine, amphetamine and other

psychostimulants, hallucinogens and various synthetic intoxicants (Duodecim 2018.) A substance abuse problem can manifest in the form of repeated absences, tardiness, tiredness during classes, deteriorating academic performance, neglect of duties, financial problems and propensity for accidents. Identifying intoxicant use is often difficult, especially if their use is experimental or occasional. Video game addiction is fairly common among students and difficult to identify. Video game addiction has negative impacts on thoughts, mood, actions and health. Video game addiction often manifests as withdrawal, social anxiety, disrupted daily rhythm, life management challenges and neglect of personal well-being.

## How to bring up concerns and what to do?

Every student is ultimately responsible for their own well-being. However, there are situations in which a student cannot recognise the changes in their situation or coping. In such cases, members of the academic community have a responsibility to bring up their concerns, applying the *early intervention principle*. This means that the person who observes the concern brings the matter or situation up in conversation with the object of the concern. Nobody can bring up concerns observed by others; the 'owner' of the concern must always be present in the situation where the concern is brought up. The matter must be brought up in a confidential and appreciative manner, protecting the privacy of the parties. In situations where the concerns are acute, the observer of the concern considers their resources insufficient, or there are several people who share the concerns, the concerns must be brought up in the presence of several parties involved. This section describes how to proceed in various situations in which concerns are raised. A common starting point is concern over a student's well-being and study ability. It should be noted that this document does not address the question of whether the student is unsuitable for their field of study, which is based on SORA legislation. Bringing up substance abuse problems is covered in greater detail in section 5 of this document.

Table 1 describes how to proceed in various situations in which concerns are raised about a student's coping/situation. If the concern is raised by a fellow student, they should preferably have another student or a staff representative present in all situations in which concerns are brought up. Discussion with familiar teaching or guidance staff is highly recommended after the situation. The aim of this cooperation is to eliminate the concern. The concern remains if the student in question continues to exhibit symptoms or cause concerns in their environment.

Table 1. Operational guideline for bringing up concerns

### **MINOR CONCERN**

- Minor concern or occasional worry; trust in one's own ability to help is strong
- Bringing up the concern feels natural
- Thoughts of a need for additional resources
- Example: the student has absences and/or withdraws from the student group

The person who observes the concern, such as a fellow student or teacher, brings up their concern with the student and refers them on, as necessary.

### **MODERATE CONCERN**

- Concern grows and/or has persisted for a long time
- Trust in one's own ability to help deteriorates. Additional resources required

Examples: the student drops out of their studies, does not care about their own well-being, or the student is suspected of having a substance abuse problem

The person who observes the concern brings up the subject with the student either alone or together with a campus substance abuse contact person, a career tutor or a person familiar to the student.

The person who observes the concern can consult with e.g. a substance abuse contact person, a study counsellor, a study psychologist, a janitor or a head of department.

The student is referred to relevant services to receive help, if necessary.

### **MAJOR CONCERN**

- Major and/or constant concern
  - The student is in danger
  - The guidance staff or student have no means of helping
  - Additional resources and a change in the situation are needed immediately.
- Examples: the student is self-destructive, aggressive, intoxicated or detached from reality

The person who observes the concern must seek support instead of acting alone.

Contact a janitor,  
health care services,  
112.

The student is referred to relevant services to receive help.

The situation is reported to the head of department/head of unit/safety coordinator and to the campus substance abuse contact person, if necessary.

The person who observes the concern is responsible for documenting the situation.

## Operational guideline for intervening in substance abuse problems

Using intoxicants in moderation or abstaining from them is part of life management, professional growth and preparation for working life. The academic community also has a responsibility to intervene in substance abuse problems.

Every JAMK University of Applied Sciences campus has a *substance abuse contact person* who has been specifically trained to provide support in bringing up concerns. The substance abuse contact person organises the treatment referral negotiation and takes care of follow-up measures. If necessary, the substance abuse contact person also participates as a university representative in the treatment negotiation organised by health care services. The substance abuse contact person coordinates and organises drug testing and ensures that the student is heard before drug testing. The substance abuse contact person serves as liaison between the unit, the degree programme and the health care treatment unit. The substance abuse contact person collects and archives the documents related to the situation (report on removal from a teaching situation, treatment commitment, documents related to drug testing and memos).

Operational guidelines for various situations involving intoxicant use are described below:

**A) Operational guideline for when a student notices that they are in need of help due to a substance abuse or gaming problem:**

1. Contact any person who you consider reliable or the campus substance abuse contact person and tell them about your substance abuse problem. Describe the state of your studies and how you will proceed with them.
2. Working together, determine the ideal form of treatment for you and commit to it. The treatment provider can be a substance abuse nurse or a substance abuse services centre run by the SOVATEK Foundation, for example.

**B) Operational guideline for when concerns are raised about a student's use of intoxicants:**

1. As the person who observed the concern, contact the campus' substance abuse contact person. Set up a joint meeting with the student and bring up the concern with the student confidentially, while respecting their privacy. Do not make the student feel guilty, but tell them openly about the observations that you have made that contribute to your concern.
2. If necessary, consult a teacher tutor, a study counsellor, a study psychologist or health care services.
3. If the concern is moderate, the substance abuse contact person organises the student's referral to health care services for treatment in cooperation with the student (treatment commitment, APPENDIX 2).
4. The substance abuse contact person coordinates follow-up measures and possible network meetings, which may be attended by representatives of health care services and JAMK guidance staff in addition to the student.

**C) Operational guideline for when a student is intoxicated on campus:**

1. Make sure that the student poses no danger to themselves or others
- 2 a) Minor concern: bring up the subject with the intoxicated student, preferably together with another person
- 2 b) Moderate / major concerns: directly contact the janitors or 112
3. Guide the student home safely
4. Contact the campus substance abuse contact person, who is responsible for setting up how to bring up the subject and referral to treatment. Submit any documents prepared as a result of the

situation (Form: removal of a student from a teaching situation (APPENDIX 1.)) to the substance abuse contact person, who is responsible for the electronic archiving of relevant documents.

5. Initiation of disciplinary measures, if necessary (section 40 of Degree Regulations)

## Intoxicants on campus and disciplinary procedure

The use, possession and sale of intoxicants are restricted by the Finnish Narcotics Act (373/2008) and the Degree Regulations of JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Degree Regulations 2018, Section 39). Being under the influence of intoxicants and the possession and sale of intoxicants are prohibited in campus areas. If a student is suspected of or observed selling or dealing in drugs in the university's area or in the event of an acute situation involving drugs, the recommended procedure is to immediately call the national emergency number (112). Other observations and tips related to intoxicants can be reported to the police by calling their free of charge tip line either anonymously or preferably with your name and contact details. Information reported to the tip line is always processed confidentially, and the name of the person who reported the information is never disclosed to the person whom the tip pertains to.

**Drug testing.** According to the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014) and the Degree Regulations of JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Section 39: Drug testing), the university of applied sciences has the right to oblige a student, regardless of their field of study and degree programme, to provide a drug test certificate (APPENDIX 3) if there is a well-founded reason to suspect that the student is participating in study-related practical assignments or practical training under the influence of drugs or that the student has a drug addiction. Another condition is that the test is necessary for determining the student's functional capacity and that the student's responsibilities include tasks which require particular acuity, reliability, independent judgement or good reactions and in which working under the influence of drugs or being dependent on drugs would: 1) seriously endanger the life or health of the student or another person; 2) cause serious risk to traffic safety; 3) cause serious risk to the confidentiality or integrity of information protected by confidentiality provisions; or 4) significantly increase the risk of illicit trafficking and distribution of substances referred to in Section 3(1), Paragraph 5 of the Narcotics Act (373/2008) which are in the possession of a university of applied sciences, an organisation operating it or a place of training. The drug test certificate (APPENDIX 3) must be presented within a reasonable time frame determined by JAMK. JAMK will defray the cost of the drug test certificate. (Section 39: Drug testing, Degree Regulations of JAMK University of Applied Sciences 12 June 2018)

According to Section 40: **Disciplinary procedure** of the Degree Regulations of JAMK University of Applied Sciences, a student who is guilty of dishonesty or has otherwise disturbed the order at JAMK by disrupting teaching or exhibiting violent or threatening behaviour will be subject to disciplinary punishment. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, the punishment may be a written warning or a suspension for a fixed period of time not exceeding one year. Refusing to present a drug test certificate or a test result indicating drug abuse may lead to the above-mentioned disciplinary actions. The student must be provided an opportunity to be heard before a decision is made in the matter. Organising the student's hearing is the responsibility of the campus substance abuse contact person.

Decisions on giving a warning to a student are made by the Rector, and decisions on suspension for a specified period are made by the Academic Board. A student who disrupts teaching, is under the influence of alcohol, behaves in a violent or threatening manner or endangers the life or health of another student may be ordered to leave the teaching facilities or an event organised by the



educational institution, and the student may be prohibited from attending teaching for up to three working days. If a student has to be removed from teaching due to substance use, a 'removal of a student from a teaching situation due to intoxicant use' form (APPENDIX 1) must always be filled out, and if the situation was deemed threatening, a written report concerning a threatening situation must be prepared with the safety coordinator. Recording and documenting the chain of events is essential for piecing together the situation and for follow-up investigations. (Degree Regulations of JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Section 40: Disciplinary procedure)

## Where can a student find help when their own resources are not enough? – Referral to treatment and follow-up

Promoting and maintaining good learning, physical and mental health and social well-being requires comprehensive support from the university and student health care. Our shared goal is to create a healthy and safe learning environment, protect mental health, prevent social exclusion and promote the well-being of the study environment.

Students of JAMK can turn to the following actors for help when necessary:

- JAMK's guidance services: career tutor, peer tutor, mentor, study counsellor, study psychologist, school pastor, student services secretary  
<https://studyguide.jamk.fi/en/Study-Guide-Bachelors-Degrees/Studying-at-jamk/Study-Guidance-and-Support/>
- City of Jyväskylä student health care: public health nurse, psychiatric nurse, depression nurse, doctor <https://studyguide.jamk.fi/en/Study-Guide-Bachelors-Degrees/Studying-at-jamk/practical-information-for-international-degree-students/>
- City of Jyväskylä health care and social services:
  - o Mental health issues: city psychologist, nutritional therapist, occupational therapist, adult psychiatry services, youth clinic, crisis centre Mobile, outreach youth work <https://www.jyvaskyla.fi/en/health-care-and-social-services/mental-health-and-substance-abuse>
  - o Substance abuse and gaming problems: health station substance abuse nurses, youth clinic, substance abuse services foundation SOVATEK, <http://www.sovatek.fi/apua.html> (in Finnish)

In situations in which a concern has been brought up (guidance discussion, network meeting), the aim is to find the services in the service network that would best support the student and to guide the student on how to get help. The meeting involves agreeing on follow-up measures for clarifying the student's situation in a way that alleviates concerns. It is highly recommended to set up a follow-up meeting between the parties concerned, which should focus on the student's study ability, their study progress and, if necessary, referral to treatment. Setting up a follow-up meeting is particularly important in the case of substance abuse problems. In addition to the person who observed the concern, the follow-up meeting should be attended by the campus substance abuse contact person and actors relevant to the student's situation, such as a key person from JAMK guidance (career tutor/study counsellor/study psychologist) and a care provider (the city's health care and social services). If the concerns about the student's situation are minor, the follow-up meeting can be scaled down.

## Monitoring, evaluating and updating the operating model

The effectiveness of the model for early intervention for students of JAMK is evaluated and updated annually by Educational Development Services in collaboration with the student well-being group (HyPe Team). The evaluation utilises the documentation available and possibly the experiences of the concerned parties and feedback from the students collected during Grumble Week, for example.

Any documentation created in connection with processing the model for early intervention is processed and archived electronically in the JAMK case management system (TWeb) according to the information management plan. If persons from outside the JAMK personnel participate in providing guidance to the student, the documentation is delivered to JAMK on paper and attached to the case management system in electronic form. Separate instructions will be created on the process and the processing of documentation.

### **Appendix 1: Removal from a teaching situation due to intoxicant use**

#### **Incident report**

Description of the incident

How was intoxicant use identified?

Drunkenness

Other intoxication

Other withdrawal symptoms

hangover

Inappropriate/disruptive behaviour

The student's own view of the situation: Admitted/denied intoxicant use

Further measures

Drug testing recommended

Other plan

Place and date

Teacher's signature, name in block letters and contact information

The signed report will be delivered on paper to the campus substance abuse contact person.

#### **2: Treatment commitment**

##### **Confirmed negative impacts of intoxicant use on studies**

Hangover days Accidents Drunkenness Other intoxication

Neglect of study-related assignments Endangerment of patient safety

Relationship problems Absences

Other negative impacts, please specify

#### **Commitment**

I commit to treatment for my substance abuse problem. The precise content of the treatment will be determined in a treatment plan prepared by health care services.

#### **3: Information transfer form to health care services – student has been obliged to present a drug test certificate**

##### **Grounds for obliging the student to present a drug test certificate**

- Suspected of being under the influence of intoxicants  
 Suspected drug addiction

**Suspected intoxication**

**Location**

**Date**

**Time**

**Name of the person carrying out the intoxication assessment**

**Intoxication assessment**

Speech: intelligible / unintelligible

Reacts to being spoken to: yes / reduced

Sense of time and space: yes / reduced

Walking: steady / unsteady

Reactions: normal / slow

Smell of alcohol

Appearance: calm, collected / sleepy / euphoric, energetic / threatening / anxious / teary

Physical symptoms: none / restlessness / sweating / tremors / vomiting

Description of reduced ability to function

**Contact information of the university representative who obliged the student to present the drug test certificate**

**The student has been referred to health care for drug testing**

**Name of health care unit**

**Name of possible escort**

Signature of the person carrying out the intoxication assessment

**Student's views**

I admit to using intoxicants / drug addiction

I deny using intoxicants / drug addiction

The student must bring photo ID to the test situation.

JAMK will save the document electronically and deliver the original, signed paper document to health care services. The student will be provided with a copy of the document.