

A problem shared

Your Union Advice newsletter – a little bit of help when you need it most

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Mental health and activities

By Josh, your Vice President (Activities)

Hi all, I'm Josh. To say 20/21 has been a tough year is an understatement, this year has thrown some unique challenges our way. It is now more important than ever to look after each other and yourself, while it seems difficult to look after yourself and your own mental health right now here are a few tips.

Before we start this article if you are feeling low right now that is okay and completely understandable, your Union of Students have an advice service offering free and impartial advice on a wide range of issues affecting students. The advice service can also signpost you to other services such as Student Wellbeing if you could benefit from speaking to a trained professional about any mental health struggles you are dealing with.

While it may sound cliché but healthy body healthy mind. Getting active or getting involved in sports can be very beneficial for mental health, exercise is a great tool to boost your mental health. When you exercise your body releases a chemical called endorphins. These endorphins trigger a positive feeling and exercise is a great stress buster! It can be difficult to get motivated when your mental health leaves you feeling low but it's important to get even a little bit active every day to clear your mind and release these endorphins. Going for light walks is a great way to get active, another way of getting active is to get involved in organised sport which is now slowly returning in-line with government guidelines.

Keeping physically active is important but also keeping your mind active is just

as important, there is a clear link between leisure activities and positive mental health. Hobbies or any social and creative recreation can have a meaningful positive impact on mood, whether this is picking up your favourite game, reading your favourite book or painting these are some examples of how you can pass the time. If you are struggling to think of ways to pass time or are interested in starting a new hobby, then be sure to check out all the societies on offer at the Union. We have many societies everything from eSports to Musical Theatre and they are great ways of trying something new.

However, before rushing into activities and sports remember low batteries need recharging. By this I mean if you are feeling low it's okay to take all the time you need before getting active. Take some time out for self-care, self-care are techniques to improve or preserve mental health. Practicing good self-care means you'll need to dedicate time that would otherwise be spent on other people, or activities, and start spending it doing healthy and enriching things for you. Whether mediating or relaxing it's fine to take some time for yourself before getting involved with activities if you think it will help you. Remember be kind to yourself!

If you're interested in getting involved in any club or society then be sure to check them all out on our website derbyunion.co.uk/getinvolved or if you feel you would benefit from speaking to our Advice Service then be sure to go to derbyunion.co.uk/advice

Stay safe. Stay well. Stay connected.



Gambling

Gambling problems are on the rise as stress and boredom is increased during lockdown. During the first month of the first lockdown in March last year, online virtual sports betting increased by 88% and online poker by 53% compared to the same month the previous year. Whilst you may picture gambling addicts as older men, hunched over slot machines, trying to get the 'big win', it just simply isn't the case. Gambling issues can affect anyone from all walks of life. With the move from the traditional bookies to online gambling, it has become more accessible and more popular. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness and for anyone who feels they may have a gambling problem to know where to go for help and support.

So firstly, what is problem gambling?

Problem gambling is when you are unable to stop yourself from gambling even when it is disrupting your life. It is easy to believe that 'one more bet could win back all the money lost', but it's important to recognise when gambling for fun has become much more sinister than that and you could possibly have a problem.

There are many signs which could indicate that you have a problem. These include:

- Spending more money and time on gambling than you can afford
- Finding it hard to manage or stop your gambling
- Becoming secretive as you try and hide your gambling
- Having arguments with family or friends about money and gambling
- Losing interest in usual activities or hobbies like going out with friends or spending time with family
- Chasing losses or gambling to get out of financial trouble
- Making poor choices to feed your gambling problem, such as, taking out large loans or stealing

The NHS has created a questionnaire which helps to indicate whether you could have a problem. You can take the quiz at nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/gambling-addiction

How to combat gambling

Quitting gambling when you have a gambling problem will never be easy, but these are some tips that may help:

1. Acceptance is key. The first step is to recognise and accept that you have a problem. You may have hurt people in the past, but it's important to recognise that it's happened and it's time to move on and make things right.
2. Confiding in your loved one can also help. It's time to have those awkward, shameful conversations. Opening up to your loved ones can allow them to be aware and support you in recovery.
3. Seeking professional help is so important. There are many charities and support groups out there that can offer you the help and guidance that you need.

Here are some of the support groups available

Gamcare are an independent charity who offer free confidential support to anyone who feels they have a gambling problem. They run the National Gambling Helpline (0808 8020 133) and 24hr live chat: gamcare.org.uk/get-support

Gambling Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem and help others do the same. This site offers various support including a forum, a chat room, literature and most importantly a meeting finder: gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Online Student Livingroom

This academic year has been difficult to connect with others and so the Union has been working on different ways to provide student spaces that allow virtual socialisation. We wanted to move away from social media and create a student only space that doesn't have an overload of information. We felt that using discord would fit our needs and so we are trialling a Union discord server that is a space to be used however students wish. It is run by the Full Time Officer team and there is space for students to make suggestions and ask for different channels to be added. So far, we have channels for pictures of pets, memes, tv shows and more. The good thing about discord is that you can choose which area you want to see, if you don't want to see one of the channels you don't have to interact with it.

discord.gg/ffcDDVzeVG

Interested in student media or fundraising?

If so, applications are now live to be on the committee of our Student-Led Services for next year.

Student-Led Services work similarly to our Sports and Societies in that they have committees who lead them. However, one main difference is that committee members are appointed through an application and an interview. This means that where there are more technical roles, they can be filled by students with the most appropriate level of expertise.

What is RAG?

RAG (Raise and Give) support students wanting to fundraise for various causes throughout the year. Throughout the year RAG holds an array of fundraising events and activities, raising money for various charitable causes. They work with organisations to support both national and local charities. RAG often work with various providers to offer students the opportunity to complete an international challenge to raise money. In the past, this has included events such as climbing Kilimanjaro and Mount Everest.

What is Phantom Media?

Phantom Media is your student media team – there are four branches of Phantom Media. Phantom Paper, Phantom Radio, Phantom TV and Phantom's Marketing and Finance team. Phantom Media aims to provide support and opportunities to anyone looking to progress in TV, Radio and Journalism. They provide a creative and innovative way of bringing students together and it could be a great opportunity for you to kickstart your career, explore different options within a supported creative field, and give you great experience to put on your CV! The fourth strand of Phantom Media is their Marketing and Finance team and they to support Phantom Media run like a business, working to market and review their finances to support them in making an income through adverts, filmed video content and providing music at live events.

If you're wanting to find out more then please go to derbyunion.co.uk/getinvolved/ssl where you can view the individual role descriptions for the committees and apply!

Academic Offences

An academic offence occurs when a student tries to gain an unfair advantage by breaking or not following the academic regulations.

It's important for you to be aware of the academic offence regulations in order to prevent a suspected academic offence investigation. The Advice Team are available to offer 1-1 support if you have been suspected of an academic offence. We can support from the moment you are made aware that there is a suspected academic offence, ensuring you understand the procedure fully, to attending the meetings with you for added support.

The types of academic offences

- **Plagiarism:** This occurs when a student submits work that is not their own. It tends to be the most common and can occur when students don't reference properly or copy and paste large chunks of text from other resources.
- **Collusion:** This is when a student knowingly allows another student to copy their work.
- **Impersonation:** Sitting an exam for another student or submitting another student's work.
- **Contract Cheating:** Obtaining academic work from a third party.
- **Improper exam conduct:** being in possession of an unauthorised paper, materials or devices in an exam
- **Self-Plagiarism:** When a student has submitted the same piece of their own work for assessment and award of credit in two (or more) modules
- **Fabrication:** Misrepresenting data

What happens when you are suspected of an academic offence

If you are suspected of an academic offence, you will receive an email inviting you to a meeting with your Programme Leader. This

is a step 1 meeting, where you have the opportunity to explain how the suspected academic offence may have occurred. This gives the Programme Leader an opportunity to decide whether the offence occurred due to a misunderstanding or inexperience or whether it needs to be referred to a step 2 meeting. If the Programme Leader decides it is due to inexperience, the outcome could be:

- Advisory note placed on file
- Referral which is capped at 40%

A step 2 meeting is a meeting with the Dean or Director of the College/Department. They will hold a meeting with you to investigate the evidence and determine an appropriate course of action. At this meeting, you can bring evidence, witnesses and a written statement. The outcomes of this meeting include the outcomes for the step 1 and:

- A written warning
- Failure of exam of assignments
- Failure of module
- Expelled from programme

If the Dean/Director is unable to decide, the case could be referred to a panel made up of University staff.

Academic appeals

A Union self-help guide

Talk to
US

Your Union of Students' independent advice service
01332 591507
advice@derbyunion.co.uk
derbyunion.co.uk/advice

How we can help

Whilst it can be very daunting to go through these procedures, you don't have to go through it alone. You have the right to have a Union Student Advisor attend all meetings with you for support. We can help prepare you for each meeting and answer any questions you may have.

Appeal

We can support you through the appeals process if needed.

Housing Issues and Advice

From your Union's advice service

Remember, during your time at University, you may experience a range of difficulties in relation to housing and accommodation. The Union of Students can help you with lots of practical advice and support around contracts, deposits and disrepair.

If you are experiencing any challenges, such as, issues with the landlord or housemates, book an appointment with an Advisor and we'll be happy to help.



FREE Condom Postal Service from the NHS

Your Sexual Health Matters provides a free and confidential condom and lube by post service to people who live in Derbyshire and Derby City.

Packs are sent in a discrete plain envelope with a plain postmark and will fit through a letter box.

They will process one order per month per person.

For more information, please visit:

yoursexualhealthmatters.org.uk/contraception/condoms/postal-condoms

Improve the advice service

Any ideas on how to improve your advice service, we'd love to hear them. Either pop them onto the ideas forum via derbyunion.co.uk/ideas or contact us directly using the contact details below.

Live Chat

The Advice Team are now available through the Live Chat function on the Union website for quick guidance and information

derbyunion.co.uk/advice/livechat/

Your Union's independent advice service

Contact us on **01332 591507** if you need advice or help or email advice@derbyunion.co.uk

derbyunion.co.uk/advice