

Dealing with Conflict on AskUS Desk Guidance

The University aims to provide a safe environment for all staff, students and visitors. It is recognised that confrontational situations can arise occasionally. This guidance has been produced to ensure that staff and visiting professionals feel safe and secure and know what to do in the case of emergency.

To this end the office has supplied panic alarms to be used at the AskUs Advice Desk.

This procedure should be read in association with the Divisional Procedure for '*Dealing with Confrontational Situations*' and "*panic alarm test guidance*."

Please be aware that these situations are very rare and it is unlikely you will ever need to use this.

Response

Depending upon the nature of the incident or threat staff on the askUS desk have a number of response options:

If you do not feel in immediate danger:

A) Get a manager

- 1) If you feel uncomfortable to continue dealing with a customer for whatever reason you can call a manager to deal with them for you. Ask the student to take a seat in the referral lounge. You do not need to explain reasons or worry about losing face.
- 2) If possible always position yourself so you are able to exit a room should you be in an interview room.

B) Emergency password

- a. If manager's assistance is required due to the inappropriate behaviour of a visitor at the askUS desk, and you do not want to leave the desk or be so obvious you are calling for help the emergency password should be used. Staff should call any member of staff in Student Life and use the emergency password **Dorothy**. Upon hearing this word the member of staff should call security and attend the desk with colleagues to deal with the incident. If possible you also mention your location "Could you please check if DOROTHY has been to Kent today please?"
Security or staff can call the police if required.

If you feel in danger:

- A) If you feel in immediate physical danger you should activate the panic alarm situated under the askUs desk. Both buttons must be pressed at the same time. It may be appropriate to tell the student you are going to do this as it may make them leave. They will not be able to hear the alarm (this would have to be down to your judgement as it will depend on the situation).

When the panic alarm is activated an alarm also sounds in the Maxwell Security Hub and immediate assistance will be sent to the building. If deemed necessary security will inform the Police by dialing 999.

A member of staff should always seek help if they feel threatened, unsafe or endangered.

Security should be called for all cases of aggressive, abusive or inappropriate behaviour.

Testing the panic alarm

Regular testing and drill of the panic alarm will be undertaken to keep this response fresh in the minds of staff. See guidance.

The alarm can be disarmed using a key kept in the key cupboard in the upstairs office.

Follow up

- Review incident - did appropriate response occur? If not, what lessons can we learn?
- Staff involved should have a de-brief with their line manager to check wellbeing and take action as appropriate
- Line manager to take forward any issues to senior manager/Associate Director.