

New report reveals 48% do not receive support service advice

By [Imogen Bellamy](#), News Editor

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Image: Lars Curfs

A NEW EXCEPTIONAL circumstances report has been released by YUSU Community and Wellbeing Officer Mia Shantana Chaudhuri-Julyan. Chaudhuri-Julyan conducted a survey to look into the discrepancies between academic departments regarding allowances for those in need.

There were 209 participants across the University, from a range of subjects, all of whom had needed to use Exceptional Circumstances Affecting Assessment, as it is formally known, in the past. Mental health provision, including the allocation of exceptional circumstances, has been widely criticised at York in the past and this report reveals a similar trend, with 40 per cent of student respondents having been directed to Open Door.

48 per cent of respondents claimed that they had not received information on support services from their supervisors, while one fifth claimed they felt there had not been adequate support at all. There had also been claims of increased anxiety and isolation as a result of the students' experiences.

Breaches in the University's code of conduct, dissatisfied students due to inflexibility of adjustments made, and a "problematic inconsistency in support for students" have all been highlighted by the report. As a result, an event on 12 February will help supervisors know how to properly provide effective signposting, pastoral support to students, and improve the support and information they are given regarding their mental health and wellbeing.

A third year English and Related Literatures student, who had received an extension due to exceptional circumstances in the past, had this to say: "I didn't find it difficult to receive support – I emailed my tutor, and she told me who to go to. It was less than 24 hours before I was assured that I had a week longer to complete my essay. This may, however, have been due to the medical nature of my problem. If it was pastoral, or psychological, I'm not so sure it would be as easy to prove, and therefore it may have been a lot harder for me."

Chaudhuri-Julyan released the following statement to accompany her report: "This research has been a key manifesto project. In pledging to lobby for a fairer exceptional circumstances procedure, I have been

surprised by only one thing – that it has not been the policy itself that is the key issue. It’s clear from the research that it is generally well thought out. The problem is the variation in the implementation of this policy across the departments.

“The policy itself is broadly speaking designed to be applied in a flexible way, however this has not translated effectively into reality. Communication of the policy to students has been found to be lacking, along with supervisors’ understanding of the breadth of support services and their ability to support disclosures and signpost effectively.

“In presenting this report to the University and handing it over to the Academic Officer, Julian Porch, to take forward as part of a formal review of exceptional circumstances, I have felt very positive in that the University has really listened to the voice of the students on this issue and the recommendations YUSU has put forward. This report goes beyond just an academic procedure, it is clearly a window into the overlap with student welfare and shows the gaps that we now must work hard to fill.

“I want to see this report’s recommendations go forward into concrete action plans for the year ahead. I have no doubt that the positive relationship we have with the University in our mutual care about these issues will drive forward positive change in the months to come, and I will continue to lobby for these recommendations to be taken seriously as a matter of the utmost priority.”



One comment

Kiana

27 Mar '18 at 7:22 am

So that’s the case? Quite a reeotalivn that is.

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