Guide to helping suicidal or confused persons
5 steps to providing appropriate care

1. Ask the question: Thoughts about death, confused?
- Check whether student/PhD student/staff member needs help
- Give referral if necessary. Check whether the person can be sent to the appropriate staff member [study advisor, student psychologist, student counsellor, manager, staff welfare officer] or offer online information

2. Ask the question: Thoughts about suicide? Feeling agitated, panicky or anxious?
- Cooperative student/PhD student/staff member
  - Advise the person to seek support from family and friends
  - Help the person make an urgent appointment with a GP as soon as possible
  - Where necessary, make an appointment with the student psychologist (via study advisor) or with the staff welfare officer (via the manager or P&O advisor)

3. Ask the question: Specific plan, preparations? Confused or suspicious of others?
- Uncouoperative student/PhD student/staff member
  - Get the social safety coordinator involved. At the latest, they will get in touch on the next working day. If it cannot wait and the situation is urgent, call the emergency number: 020-5982222.

4. Ask the question: Today or tomorrow? A threat to themselves or those around them?
- Cooperative student/PhD student/staff member
  - Contact a colleague or designated VU staff member (study advisor, student psychologist, student counsellor, manager, staff welfare officer)
  - Ask the person to contact a family member or friend for support
  - Request the person’s name, address and telephone number
  - Help the person make an appointment with a GP as soon as possible
  - Motivate the person to take a family member or friend with them to the GP
  - Ask the person to contact you as soon as they have arranged support

5. Evaluate whether: Situation unsafe for themselves or others, are they uncommunicative, desperate?
- Cooperative student/PhD student/staff member
  - Motivate the person to visit their GP and take along a family member or friend
  - Help the person make an appointment with their GP that same day
  - Request the person’s name, address and telephone number
  - Ask the person to contact you as soon as they have arranged support
  - Arrange a follow-up meeting with the person
  - When in doubt, contact the social safety coordinator for advice

- Cooperative student/PhD student/staff member
  - Get the social safety coordinator involved. At the latest, they will get in touch on the next working day. If it cannot wait and the situation is urgent, call the emergency number: 020-5982222.

Warning signs of suicide:
Extreme sadness, unbearable pain, rage or hopelessness. No longer getting round to doing things, no longer feeling joy, loss of interest, withdrawing from social contact, looking pale and poorly groomed, poor academic performance, sudden mood swings or improved mood, saying goodbye by giving away personal items – when in doubt go with your gut feeling!

Signs of confusion:
Disturbed speech, behaviour and feelings. Erratic speech or not finishing sentences, displaying different emotions simultaneously, starting something but not finishing it. Being suspicious of people, believing they are being sent special signals from a higher being by radio or television, believing they have special powers. Hearing voices, seeing things, experiencing things others don’t notice.