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<cn>3.<ct>Looking back to look forward: scaffolding the student support pathway for students through the eyes of an early career legal academic

<fs:lrh>How to offer effective wellbeing support to law students

<fs:rrh>Looking back to look forward

<fs:abstract>Our chapter outlines a pathway to help structure student support by drawing upon our combined experience as academics with responsibility for providing student support. In our teaching practice, we often found it difficult to navigate the student support terrain and this led us to create the CADSIF formula to help give some structure to our provision of student support. CADSIF focuses on structuring support by ensuring ‘Contact’ with the student to provide ‘Assurance’ through a supportive ‘Dialogue’ to ‘Signpost’ students to appropriate support. This helps to provide students with the ‘Information’ they need to make informed decisions in their personal learning, alongside continual supportive ‘Follow-Ups’ by academic colleagues. We explore the use of the CADSIF formula in four fictional personas to reflect on how it can be maximised to scaffold student support in a variety of different circumstances.

<fs:keywords>student support; case studies; dialogue; signposting

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<p:a>3.1 Introduction

<p:text>As an early career legal academic, there are many ways in which you will engage with your students throughout the course of their studies. Principally, you will be tasked with facilitating knowledge creation and exchange by developing learning and teaching activities. However, you will likely also be responsible for providing students with some form of academic or pastoral support.¹ Our chapter is concerned with the latter, and its aim is simple:

¹ There is much literature on defining academic support and pastoral care in the context of legal education. For a general discussion in relation to this, see Kristine S. Knaplund and Richard H. Sander, ‘The Art and Science of Academic Support’ (1995) 45(2) Journal of Legal Education 157; and Paula Lustbader, ‘From Dreams to Reality:

to provide you with an insight into our approach to student support to help you reflect on yours and consider whether (and where) there is room for improvement. At the outset, we would like to highlight that the advice provided in this book is drawn from our own experience in our respective roles as legal academics and from preliminary research undertaken in the field of legal education.

Students by their very nature are diverse, requiring a wide and dynamic range of support streams tasked to assist them with becoming effective independent learners.² The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing UK government lockdowns from March 2020 onwards, as well as the normalisation of conversations around physical and mental health and social issues affecting student retention and experience, have accentuated student support needs, which now prove to have a continuing impact on the student learning process. In this chapter, we explore ways of approaching student support in the course of fulfilling your role as a legal academic. The suggestions and tips provided throughout this chapter are not represented as being the only way to proceed. Rather, they offer a structured starting point to addressing student support needs alongside other techniques and approaches you can utilise, some of which can be found in other chapters of this book.

<p:a>3.2 A primer on student support

<p:text>Step into the shoes of your past, undergraduate student self. At some point, you will have accessed or felt like you needed to access some form of support. Such support could have been provided by your peers, professional services staff or ultimately the academic staff teaching you. Maybe you wanted to clarify a point in a module you found confusing or hard to grasp. You might have been anxious about your progression and needed support. Equally, you might have needed support beyond the realm of academic matters. You may for example have had financial difficulties or a health problem precluding you from studying effectively. Looking back on these experiences, can you still say if the support provided by your department or university, if any, was helpful? If not, to what extent was it unhelpful? Can you also say why you came to this conclusion? By now, you may have arrived at somewhat different conclusions to those of other readers. Differing experiences prior to entering university and variations in cultural attributes often mean students have different interactions with, and perceptions about, accessing student support. The roles developed to provide

The Emerging Role of Law School Academic Support Programs' (1997) 31 University of San Francisco Law Review 839.

² Cf. ch 11.

student support, the accessibility of the support provided and the attentiveness of the staff providing it might also have been conducive to the shaping of your experience.³

Combining our reflections on our past experiences with our interactions with students in our roles as legal academics, we arrived at the conclusion that the disparities in students' experiences with student support must be expected and addressed in the course of providing student support. The diverse support needs of students may however lead to confusion amongst students as to *what* kind of support is available, *where* they can access that support and *who* is capable of providing such support. At the same time, students' differing needs are often such that distinguishing them in the foregoing manner is practically difficult to achieve for us as academics, let alone for students themselves.

The turmoil the COVID-19 pandemic brought to academia, alongside the greater awareness gained as to student needs, had us faced with an uncomfortable truth: the structures and systems of student support require re-calibration and stress-testing to cater for students' support needs even in the most difficult of circumstances.⁴ Our research in this area suggests not only that student support should be provided holistically, combining the provision of academic support and pastoral care, but that it should also be provided as such across multiple streams of student support.⁵

While we have initial suggestions as to how the holistic provision of student support may be workable in practice,⁶ we are still probed with seeking to answer two principal questions. First, how should a system of student support work to provide academic support and pastoral care holistically at a departmental and institutional level? Secondly, how can legal academics provide academic support and pastoral care holistically in their respective roles, whether that be the traditional role of a lecturer or tutor, or a more specific one, such as a role dedicated to providing additional academic support and/or as the main departmental point of contact for pastoral care? This chapter endeavours to shed some light on the second question, which is

³ Cf. ch 4.

⁴ Cf. Pradeep Sahu, 'Closure of Universities Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Impact on Education and Mental Health of Students and Academic Staff' (2020) 12(4) *Cureus* e7541.

⁵ Cf. (forthcoming) Laura Hughes-Gerber, Noel McGuirk and Rafael Savva, 'Sculpting the Provision of Student Support for Law Students to enhance inclusivity: complications and challenges' (*forthcoming* *Erasmus Law Review*, Spring 2024).

⁶ *Ibid.*

principally drawn from our experience gained in student support roles at Lancaster University Law School.⁷

3.3 Getting to know our students

The approach we adopt in this chapter is to create a range of fictional personas aimed towards reflecting some of the students you will likely encounter over the course of your career. This approach aligns with service design thinking as the means to simulate student experiences to allow us to map different ways in which students can be supported.⁸ As with any chapter, there is a limit to the amount of space we can dedicate to personas but we hope that at least some of these characters partially reflect your students. Personas have been used in a variety of industries as the means to test ideas and suggest pathways.⁹ Through the use of personas, we can emulate real-life student diversity and life-like student support needs to enable us to reflect on how we, as academics, can best support them.

3.3.1 The Role of the Legal Academic

What is the role of a legal academic in supporting students?¹⁰ You will know there is no easy answer to this question as your role is unique and likely also dynamic.¹¹ When it comes to providing student support, we have found that there are three factors that have helped us to effectively support our students. First, keeping alert to the different student stress points in the academic year from the anxiety of starting university to the demands of studying Law, keeping on top of deadlines and completing assessments, perhaps also whilst trying to complete paid work and/or work experience. These activities create stress points in the year

⁷ See ch 5.

⁸ Michael Doherty and Tina McKee, 'Service design comes to Blackstone's tower: Applying design thinking to curriculum development in legal education' in Emily Allbon and Amanda Perry-Kessaris (eds), *Design in Legal Education* (Routledge, 2022).

⁹ Cf. Mariana Lilley, Andrew Pyper and Susan Attwood, 'Understanding the Student Experience Through the Use of Personas' (2012) 11(1) *Innovation in Teaching and Learning in Information and Computer Sciences* 4–13; Steve Mulder and Ziv Yaar, *The User is Always Right, A Practical Guide to Creating and Using Personas for the Web* (New Riders, 2007); John Pruitt and Tamara Adlin, *The Persona Lifecycle, Keeping People in Mind Throughout Product Design* (Elsevier Inc, 2006).

¹⁰ For further discussion of the ambiguity in the role of the academic supporting students, see Gareth Hughes, Mehr Panjwani, Priya Tulcidas and Nicola Byron, 'Student Mental Health: The Role and Experiences of Academics' *Student Minds* (2018), p. 19, available at: http://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/180129_student_mental_health_the_role_and_experience_of_academics_student_minds_pdf.pdf (accessed 2 October 2023).

¹¹ Cf. ch 9.

that pose challenges to our students and if we are alert to them then it becomes easier to proactively identify students who might be struggling. Second, we have found that using the available data on attendance and assessment submissions can be a key indicator of a student support need. Third, the use of formal and informally scheduled meetings throughout the year provides the means to check in on a student's progress and their welfare.

3.3.2 Approach to Student Support

Now that we have established the importance of student support, and its holistic provision, the question then turns to the role of the ECR legal academic in structuring support to your students in practice. Our approach to student support can be summarised by way of the 'CADSIF' formula.¹² This is not intended to be either restrictive or prescriptive, rather it should be used as a general point of orientation in approaching student support:

1. **Contact – establish contact with the student:** The appropriate way to establish initial contact will depend on the nature of the situation and may be established by the student themselves should they approach you directly. It could also be facilitated by a colleague or it could be down to you to approach the student and to determine the best means of doing so. It is important to note that institutional norms may dictate and/or restrict the available/appropriate means of communication, for example some institutions require that all electronic correspondence between staff and students be directed to a university email address.

2. **Assurance – reassure the student that you are here to help them and that they are doing the right thing in speaking to you:** it is important for the student to know that this is a safe space. Whilst you should not provide guarantees as to confidentiality (as depending on what the student divulges, you may be obliged to inform student wellbeing services), you should assure the student that they are taking the important first step in the support pathway and ensure that they are made to feel comfortable speaking to you.

3. **Dialogue – have an open and honest dialogue with the student. What are their concerns? What is the impact upon their studies?:** it is important to listen patiently and sympathetically to the student's concerns. It can be intimidating for students to open up, perhaps for the first time, about something which could be deeply personal to them. It is

¹² This approach is inspired by the Mental Health First Aider Action Plan: ALGEE. Cf. MHFA England, 'Being a Mental Health First Aider, Your Guide to the Role' (2021), available at:

<https://www.mentalhealththatwork.org.uk/resource/being-a-mental-health-first-aider-your-guide-to-the-role/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

important to foster an open and honest dialogue with the student to ensure that you are in a position to advise them appropriately.

4. **Signpost to appropriate institutional and external support mechanisms**¹³:

As academics we cannot purport to be able to solve all our students' problems, as much as we would like to. What we can do is signpost them to appropriate institutional and external support mechanisms. In this regard, it is particularly important to be well-versed in the former.¹⁴

5. **Information – provide the student with any additional information on appropriate support mechanisms:** Depending on the nature of the student's support needs and the nature of the institutional/external support service you have referred them to, it is good practice to provide them with further information e.g. how do they access said service? Are you able to provide them with an indication as to their waiting time? Can you/is it appropriate to expedite the process via a direct referral from you?

6. **Follow-up to check how the student is progressing and encourage support:** It is important that a student doesn't feel as though departmental support ends with a referral. For this reason, it is good practice to follow-up with a student after meeting with them to establish how they are progressing and to encourage them to continue to engage with appropriate support.

It is common that your student will view you as the academic as having all the answers that will resolve their challenges. However, the reality is that we often have to position ourselves as a listener able to talk the student through their challenges so that they can be signposted to appropriate assistance.

Positioning yourself as a listener whilst remaining alert to key stress points and stress factors throughout the academic year has in our experience proved conducive to helping students feel supported within the department itself. For example, some of the common problems we have found arising in the first term are often related to feelings of loneliness and isolation from students. The difficulty for some first years in this respect is acute. Read on to meet Samir to

¹³ Cf. Gareth Hughes, Rebecca Upsher, Anna Nobili, Ann Kirkman, Christopher Wilson, Tasmin Bowers-Brown, Juliet Foster, Sally Bradley and Nicola Byrom (2022), 'Education for Mental Health', Online: Advance HE, p. 136 f on effective signposting, available at: https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/advance-he/AdvHE_Education%20for%20mental%20health_online_1644243779.pdf (accessed 2 October 2023).

¹⁴ Hughes, Panjwani, Tulcidas and Byron (n 10) 34.

put this issue into context and to explore how you as an academic can support Samir using the support formula as your starting point.

<p:a>3.4 Samir

<p:b>3.4.1 Background

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<p:box_ptext_body>Samir is an 18-year-old First Year LLB Law student. Prior to commencing his studies this academic year, Samir achieved AAB in his A Levels. Samir was diagnosed with dyslexia whilst still at school, where he benefited from specialised educational support. He is keen to replicate this at university. Samir was the first in his close-knit family to go to university and initially felt a little apprehensive about what to expect. Samir lives on campus but travels home on occasional weekends. Alongside his studies, Samir works in retail to supplement his income from his student loan. He tends to work in varying shift patterns totalling between 15-20 hours per week. Samir has a close circle of friends and family. He is already an enthusiastic member of the university Law Society, as well as a keen footballer. Samir is interested in a career at an international Law firm, though he also remains open-minded in respect of other career paths.

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<p:b>3.4.2 Student's Experience

<p:text>After Samir moves to university, he finds the welcome week activities a little intimidating with so many people around and as he generally finds it difficult to start conversations, he doesn't manage to make any friends. Samir finds his flatmates difficult to get on with as they don't share his interests. During Samir's first week, he meets with his academic advisor who is very focused on providing advice on his studies. Although Samir hopes that once his classes begin he will soon settle into his studies, in the first few weeks of term, Samir's challenges worsen. He finds the sheer number of students in lecture halls to be overwhelming. In the smaller group sessions, Samir finds that as he doesn't know anyone, he is terrified of answering questions in case he gets the answer wrong. As the first month progresses, Samir also feels he can't go to lectures as he can't keep track of the topics with so many fellow students attending.

<p:b>3.4.3 Supporting Samir

<p:text>Samir's attendance dips and after an attendance check, you write to Samir as his academic advisor to set up a meeting to understand why he has stopped attending his classes (**Contact**). Now that Samir is coming to see you, how would you approach this? Reading this, you may think the best approach is a disciplinary approach, reprimanding Samir for

failing to attend his classes. In this type of case, we would however advocate that the stronger approach is to assure the student that they are doing the right thing by confiding in you (**Assurance**) and to begin an honest conversation by listening to them (**Dialogue**). The ultimate objective of meeting with Samir is to empower him to find a way to gain the confidence to make friends and take his place in his academic community.

A good way to start the meeting might be to highlight that you are concerned that Samir has just started university and has low attendance which will make the topics harder to study and the assessments harder to pass, with the more content he misses. Part of the problem here is that Samir does not feel part of the academic community. We, as academics, can't help him make friends but we can empower him with support to gain the confidence he needs to begin attending classes. The range of options here might include signposting Samir to a wellbeing session or a professional counselling session/activity to allow him to gain the benefit of professional advice on how to deal with the transition from school to university. There may also be opportunities for students to be referred to a student/peer mentor for help and advice on settling into university or to social groups aligned with his interests (**Signposting**). From the academic perspective, the key expectation is to focus on giving the student some options to empower them to find a solution that will work for them (**Information**). It is also good practice to check back in with the student shortly after the meeting to see what steps Samir has taken to resolve his attendance issue (**Follow-Up**).

3.4.4 Reflection

Of course, not all student support needs arise or are triggered by key stress points in the academic year like Samir's. Other students' support needs may either predate or extend far beyond their studies. Some students' support needs may arise from the curriculum itself.¹⁵ In this regard, further common examples of student challenges at university are the study of Law itself and the challenges that life can throw at us. The loss of a loved and cherished family member, friend or pet, the estrangement of students from their family, the experience of being a victim of a serious assault, a health condition, a relationship breakdown, a caring responsibility or financial challenges all depict personal challenges students may face during the course of their studies. It can be difficult for us, as academics, to support our students in specific ways to manage these challenges. Read on to meet Christine, who puts several of these challenges into context.

¹⁵ Cf. ch 10.

<p:a>3.5 Christine

<p:b>3.5.1 Background

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<p:box_ptext_body>Christine is a 46-year-old second-year mature Law student. Prior to commencing her studies, Christine worked in a variety of administration roles in human resources and has long desired a career change. After her divorce a few years ago, Christine decided to return to college and seize upon an opportunity of further study to change her life. Christine has two kids, 10 and 11, with her youngest being on the autism spectrum. This leaves a busy lifestyle for Christine but she really enjoys the challenging pace of her personal life and her studies. Christine has long held the desire to practise as a solicitor and is especially interested in employment or family law. Christine has an active range of hobbies that she likes to pursue in her free time, such as volunteering and baking.

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<p:b>3.5.2 Student's Experience

<p:text>Christine already has a hectic life with her own family with their own additional needs. After starting second year, Christine is finding the workload extremely difficult to balance with her family life. Her youngest's additional needs consume a lot of Christine's time. The move to online teaching during the pandemic helped Christine to manage her parental responsibilities as she didn't have to leave home, meaning she was able to study and be there for her children. The transition back to in-person teaching is proving difficult: there are lots of classes to go to, the module content is more difficult and there seems to be a perpetual cycle of deadlines. This has resulted in Christine having an impossible balancing exercise between university work and family life. Christine now feels that she is neglecting her children and has begun to feel low in mood. The stress of assessment after assessment, coupled with the needs of her family, has meant that she begins to feel depressed that she can't give her children the time they need.

<p:b>3.5.3 Supporting Christine

<p:text>Christine comes to see you as her academic advisor (**Contact**) – so how do you approach this? We are not counsellors or at least not professionally trained counsellors.¹⁶

¹⁶ Cf. Hughes, Upsher, Nobili, Kirkman, Wilson, Bowers-Brown, Foster, Bradley and Byrom (n 13) 132f.

Nevertheless in supporting students, we should inter alia strive to be empathetic, inclusive, student-centred and committed.¹⁷

There is no one perfect solution, in this type of circumstance we have found it common for the student to arrive at your office in the hope that you are going to present them with a solution. The first steps usually involve reassuring the student that they are doing the right thing by speaking to you (**Assurance**) and listening to them (**Dialogue**). This is usually followed by signposting the student for example to university wellbeing services to help Christine to talk through her challenges to help her find a coping mechanism. It is also good practice to refer students with a health issue to their General Practitioner for a medical diagnosis and treatment (**Signposting**).

From a departmental perspective, you are also able to help Christine to mitigate the impact of her health condition and family circumstances upon her studies. For example, you can make her aware of the relevant institutional and departmental processes, such as your institution's exceptional circumstances process and the opportunity to apply for coursework extensions, which are specifically designed to mitigate the impact of student circumstances upon their studies (**Information**). Christine might need reassurance that these processes and policies are designed with these sorts of circumstances in mind: it isn't uncommon for students to feel their situation doesn't warrant such support, frequently comparing themselves to others who they perceive as having a much worse time.

In the short-term, coursework extensions may be able to help Christine to approach her assessments¹⁸ in a systematic and manageable way in light of her difficult circumstances. The exceptional circumstances process may also provide Christine with valuable security should she prove unable to complete an assessment or if her performance in said assessment is impaired by her circumstances. In the medium term and particularly in light of the likely ongoing nature of Christine's circumstances, it is crucial that Christine engages with relevant support to ensure that she is in a position to engage with her studies going forward.¹⁹ This is

¹⁷ Cf. UKAT 'UKAT Core Values of Personal Tutoring and Academic Advising', available at: <https://www.ukat.ac.uk/standards/core-values-of-personal-tutoring-and-academic-advising/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

¹⁸ On assessment as conducive to both learning and wellbeing, Hughes, Upsher, Nobili, Kirkman, Wilson, Bowers-Brown, Foster, Bradley and Byrom (n 13) 83f.

¹⁹ Ibid p. 16 on providing for support to students who have encountered problems undermining learning and wellbeing as a key principle of curriculum supporting wellbeing and learning.

where you can help Christine by regularly checking in with her to see how she is getting on and to check she is continually supported and in a position to engage with her studies (**Follow-Up**). Sometimes for various reasons, students are reluctant to engage with support.²⁰ Sometimes they become disillusioned with it when they feel that it isn't helping them quite as much or as quickly as they would wish. In this situation, it may be up to you to persuade Christine to (continue to) engage with support or to reassure her that her perseverance will pay off. This is crucial not only from an evidentiary perspective as university support processes require evidence but also (and arguably much more importantly) from a wellbeing perspective.

Of course, should Christine's circumstances ever prove to be entirely prohibitive as to engagement with her studies, you can also guide her through the relevant university processes, including the option to pause her academic studies via a period of intercalation. For some students, this option provides them with the time they need to focus on getting themselves back on track and in a position to resume their academic studies.

<p:a>3.6 Winnie

<p:b>3.6.1 Background

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<p:box_ptext_body>Winnie is a 21-year-old Final Year LLB Law international student. Prior to commencing her studies, Winnie achieved the equivalent of AAA at A Level, in addition to obtaining a merit-based scholarship which has assisted her to attend university abroad. Winnie is the youngest in her family, with both her parents and her older sibling being established professionals. Winnie feels under immense pressure as to both her own and her parents' expectations of her. Winnie is introverted. She would like to be more active socially and in student societies but feels guilty when she is not working towards completing her degree. In line with her parents' expectations, Winnie would like to pursue a career at the bar.

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<p:b>3.6.2 Student's Experience

<p:text>As a final year, international student, Winnie is facing unique challenges. The former means that Winnie is likely to feel under increased pressure compared to her previous two years of study. She may also be more focused on post-degree career planning than she has been in previous years and preparing pupillage applications and attending interviews may

²⁰ Hughes, Panjwani, Tulcidas and Byron (n 10) 32.

prove difficult to balance with her heavy final-year workload. Winnie's status as an international student also means that she may face unique challenges compared to home students, for example financial pressure stemming from a higher tuition fee burden, a lack of awareness of available NHS services, loneliness and isolation.²¹

3.6.3 Supporting Winnie

Following a seminar, you approach Winnie (**Contact**) as you notice that she has been uncharacteristically quiet in this week's seminar, having not volunteered an answer and having avoided eye contact with you. You listen to Winnie's concerns and reassure her that she is doing the right thing by confiding in you (**Assurance**). Winnie breaks down and admits that she has not been able to prepare for today's seminar. She tells you that she has stayed up all night for the past seven days completing pupillage applications following a rejection from a Chambers she had set her heart on. Winnie says that she is terrified as to how her parents will react should she fail to secure pupillage and obtain a first-class degree. She is unsure how to cope with the pressure and feels completely burnt out (**Dialogue**).

Many of us will find it easy to empathise with Winnie's situation, having felt overwhelmed by the pressure of our own – and others' – expectations of us. In this regard, Winnie would benefit from being referred to both her GP and to student wellbeing services (**Signpost**). As an international student, Winnie may be less familiar with accessing NHS services than a home student would be and may therefore require additional guidance in this respect (**Information**).

You follow up with Winnie two weeks later to see how she is getting along (**Follow-Up**).

When you broach the idea of whether she has accessed student wellbeing services, she admits that she has not, explaining that in her own cultural context it is taboo to talk about one's mental health. How can we as academics approach this situation? We do not possess in-depth knowledge of the cultural context of all our students and the impact said context may have on both a student's support needs and their engagement with appropriate support mechanisms.

What we can and arguably should do is promote the value of university support services and processes. We can also clarify any misconceptions a student has about accessing support services e.g. that this information could be disclosed to a future employer in a reference or

²¹ Cf. e.g. Sidonie Ecochard and Julia Fotheringham, 'International Students' Unique Challenges – Why Understanding International Transitions to Higher Education Matters' (2017) 5(2) *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice* 100–108. Also see Emmanuel E. Akanwa, 'International Students in Western Developed Countries: History, Challenges, and Prospects' (2015) 5(3) *Journal of International Students* 271–84.

that their parents may find out that they have done so. Both promoting the value of university support services and clarifying misconceptions ultimately helps to tackle and break down the stigma which for some students surrounds their decision as to whether to access university wellbeing services.²²

3.7 Philip

3.7.1 Background

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<p:box_ptext_body>Philip is a 22-year-old undergraduate BA Law and Criminology student. Philip is in the second year of his studies. Prior to commencing his studies, Philip achieved a higher distinction in his BTEC Diploma. Philip had previously attempted a Business and Marketing degree at another university but due to high levels of anxiety, he dropped out at the end of the first year. Philip's anxiety was so bad, he just couldn't complete his written assessments. Philip's mind would go blank and he would feel his heart racing. He was so embarrassed he just withdrew from his studies without engaging with his department. Philip took a break for two years and decided to return to study for a Law and Criminology degree as he wants to become a police officer. He was apprehensive about returning to university as he was a little older than his peers and he was fearful of his anxiety returning. Philip progressed well through first year and passed his assessments first time around. Philip was lucky as he only had one written exam in which he achieved a marginal pass. He lives on campus and has a close relationship with his mother. Philip regularly returns home at the weekend and works locally on campus to supplement his student loan.

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3.7.2 Student's Experience

<p:text>Philip is at the end of the second year of his BA degree and is facing four written exams. Given his experience of written assessments, and the fact he has never reached second year before, he is facing a significant challenge. Will his anxiety resurface, what can he do to manage it and how will his department support him? Philip will likely feel under pressure to complete his assessments so that he can progress to his final year and then onto his dream job.

3.7.3 Supporting Philip

²² Hughes, Panjwani, Tulcidas and Byron (n 10) 32.

<p:text>You run an exam workshop to help students prepare for their written assessment in your module. Following the workshop, Philip approaches you (**Contact**) and appears to be quite stressed. He is seeking guidance on the question areas for your written assessment. You are aware from his demeanour that this is more than an attempt to seek out topic areas to help focus his revision. You respond to Philip by reassuring him that he has been to most of your lectures and all the seminars which puts him in pole position for his exams. (**Assurance**). You also offer him a one-to-one meeting in your office hours so that you can open a dialogue with Philip to explore any potential issues he is facing (**Dialogue**). During this meeting, you discover Philip's experience of written assessments. Philip confides in you that his anxiety is worse than ever and he is thinking of withdrawing from his studies.

Many of us will find it easy to empathise with Philip as few enjoy completing written assessments but the issue of serious anxiety effectively debilitating a student striving to complete his course will require sensitive ongoing support. The first step here is to signpost Philip to wellbeing services, as well as outside support services such as the GP, to ensure that he obtains the help he needs with his anxiety (**Signpost**). Signposting to departmental support services such as writing clinics or exam support clinics may also be helpful to support Philip. However, it is also important to think more broadly about how Philip might be supported through these difficult circumstances. It is clear from his experience of assessments that he is at real risk of dropping out of his course. This may prompt a need for you to open a conversation about other options he might have to allow him the space to focus on his health. As his tutor, your primary focus is his health to ensure his wellbeing. In this case, it might involve the difficult decision for Philip to intercalate or pause his studies to give him space away from the assessments to allow him to focus on his wellbeing but also to enable him to return when he is able to complete his studies.

The key information to convey to Philip relates not only to his wellbeing support options but also to his study options so that you can provide him with all the information to help him make an informed decision (**Information**). This is always a difficult choice for the student and your involvement may be needed in the form of continuous follow-ups with the student. You might provide the student with information to enable them to think about their options so that they can come back and ask further questions to help them decide on their next steps (**Follow-Up**).

<p:a>3.8 Do it yourself

<p:text>Having considered the support needs of the four personas above, it's now over to you. Meet Lewis, who is a 25-year-old postgraduate LLM Law student. Prior to commencing

his studies, Lewis acquired a BTEC Level 3 extended diploma and an undergraduate degree from another institution. Lewis found the transition to tertiary level education a challenge, though he benefited from the support offered by his undergraduate institution. Lewis is estranged from his parents, though he has a close relationship with his younger sister. Lewis lives in private rented accommodation with his long-term partner. He works alongside his studies to supplement his student loan, undertaking frequent bar work on evenings and weekends. Lewis is a conscientious student and is involved in local political campaigning in his free time. Lewis is motivated to use his LLM degree to help others and is thus interested in working in the voluntary sector.

Now imagine yourself in the following situation: A fellow student approaches you for advice in relation to Lewis. His long-term relationship has just broken down, leaving him emotionally distressed but also without a place to live. Lewis cannot go back to his parents' house and, as he is new to the area, he doesn't know how to approach finding accommodation. How would you go about supporting Lewis? Remember **CADSIF!**

Lewis returns to see you later on in the academic year to thank you for your support. You notice that Lewis has become quiet and withdrawn. He confides in you that he is struggling with the isolation of writing his dissertation and is beginning to feel increasingly distanced from his peers. How would you go about supporting Lewis? Remember **CADSIF!**

3.9 Key points in summary

In summary, student support needs are variable and complex in nature and departmental support provision should respond accordingly by treating support needs in an intrinsically holistic manner. Over the course of this chapter, we have reflected upon the role of the legal academic in supporting students by scaffolding the student support pathway for students using the CADSIF formula. We have applied the formula to four separate Law student personas and have invited you to apply it to a fifth Law student persona. In doing so, we hope to have equipped you with a systematic approach to utilise in supporting your students. As educators, we strive to enrich our students educationally but by providing students with appropriate departmental wellbeing support, we can not only facilitate our students achieving their educational goals but vitally we can also ensure that they are sufficiently supported so as to enable them to achieve their potential.

3.10 Key takeaways

1. Student support needs are variable and complex.

2. Student support provision should be holistic.

<p:n11>3. A systematic approach to student support may prove beneficial as a point of reference and orientation.</p:n11>
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