



Interview with Dr Jenny English

Jenny English is registered psychologist with over 25 years experience working in university counselling services – from the School of Early Childhood Studies in the late 1980's to Melbourne College of Advanced Education then Melbourne University in the 1990's, Deakin University in the 2000's and finally as Manager of Counselling at RMIT 2009 to 2015. Jenny is now semi retired with a small private practise providing supervision to professionals and managers across the health, welfare and education sectors.

When do academic staff approach counselling services?

Academics contact the counselling service for a broad range of reasons, but they sort of fall into categories around “What should I and shouldn't I do, what's appropriate, when I hear a student's story and I start to get worried?”, They ask about duty of care: what should they do, what's appropriate, what's within their role and responsibility? They also ring for debriefing after they've talked to a student with some serious mental health or personal stories and that's affected them in some way.

The advice generally is to seek advice, and I'm very pleased that they have rung the counselling service at this time, and to stay within their role. They are the academic, they are their teacher or their tutor, and it is very important that they are caring and supportive of their students and the best ways that they can support the student is to then get them to appropriate help. Often the student doesn't want to go anywhere else because they've made the connection with the academic. And so what we will do is give the staff member some advice on how to encourage the student, how to make that referral, whether it's to the counselling service or it's to their community or to a GP. And academics often find that very helpful because they get quite stuck with the fact that the student wanting to come back and back to them, so it's quite problematic.

Dr Jenny English
Psychologist and Academic work coach