



University of
Strathclyde
Humanities &
Social Sciences

“Trigger warnings” in the Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

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The themes we teach about in arts, humanities and social sciences are of direct relevance to all our lives. We cannot, and should not, entirely avoid trauma triggers or causing distress because of the content we teach. However, giving students information about what they can expect in the classroom and in set texts/ activities can allow them to prepare to engage with that content – or to signal that they are unable to do so – and to know where they can go for support if needed. These recommendations for teaching practice are based on our research with staff and with student survivors. The research was approved by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee and funded by the BA/Leverhulme SRG22\221390.

CONSISTENCY

- Apply a consistent approach within a unit of learning and ensure that all staff, including any guest lecturers and GTAs, are signed up to it.
- Use advisories or notices not “warnings”.

CLARITY

- Be clear about what students can expect from you *and* what you expect from them: this is a *shared* responsibility.
- Keep information descriptive and factual.
- Address content notices to everyone; don’t make assumptions about who this is relevant to and how they might respond.
- Be upfront with students about the contexts in which it is/not possible to provide advance notice (e.g. taught classes compared to work-based learning).

TIMELINESS

- Give information in a timely fashion so students can act on it without being forced into identifying themselves to you/ their classmates.
- Ensure that students are also signed up to this approach and share information about the content of class presentations in advance.

PROPORTIONALITY

- Don't state the obvious.
- Keep notices relatively short: don't overload students with information as they might miss what is important and it might establish unrealistic expectations.

EFFECTIVE SIGNPOSTING

- Ensure students who have more specific needs are aware of mechanisms for reasonable adjustments.
- Ensure requests for reasonable adjustments are respected.
- Share information about support available within your organisation and beyond and ensure it is regularly checked and updated.

Please circulate these recommendations as helpful. If you are considering adopting these and would like to hold a briefing for your department or institution, please email us at hass-triggerwarnings@strath.ac.uk and we will be happy to support this if we can. We are keen to undertake further research with staff and students about how these recommendations work in practice: if you would be interested in taking part, please email us at the address above.