Mr Speaker, I would take this opportunity to commend the Hon Member who made the Statement for bringing this matter before all of us. Mr Speaker, I would restrict my comments to the matters that he raised, which are related to students on our campuses. The Hon Deputy Minister-designate for Northern Region read a message from a student expressing some concerns. This student is from the University of Education, Winneba, the capital of my constituency.

Mr Speaker, in 2013 or 2014, we experienced a similar incident in Winneba where a student hanged himself in a hostel and I believe in the second semester of the same academic session, there was also another suicide. I interacted with some of the Students’ Representative Council (SRC) executives and they were of the view that, most of them had some disappointments when their results were released and they suspected that resulted in one particular gentleman hanging himself.

Mr Speaker, if these things are happening on our campuses and it appears that student performance is a factor, then I would like to take this opportunity to call on our professors to improve on their relationships with their students. I would want to cite a personal example when I was at the Law School at the University of Buckingham, two weeks before the results were released and before re-opening, the personal tutor would call and inform you about how you have fared in your various subjects before same is published.

When school re-opens, the first one week at the University of Buckingham, the tutor would go through the scripts with you and tell you how you performed on each of the questions. Mr Speaker, I recall that upon an advice, I restrained myself from doing Bachelor of Laws (LLB) with Economics, because my Economics was not too good during the first semester. The tutor advised me that if I follow Economics, I am likely to go home with a Third Class or something unpalatable. So, upon advice, I withdrew from Economics and stayed on my LLB course and then added Management.

Mr Speaker, again, we did Land Law and the Law of Contract and I thought that I had done so well in the examination but then my personal tutor called me that I had 2:2 and that was Second Class Lower for that course. I did not understand, but when I looked through my scripts, apparently, I had done well in the first three questions, but I had deviated the last question.

Mr Speaker, she took time to explain why I did not do well and I was all right. Mr Speaker, many of us are aware that, most students on our campuses are left in a limbo. When they write examinations and the results are — you dare not question. Mr Speaker, this is very obvious on our campuses; you dare not go and question your lecturer, even when you want to ask for a re-marking, it may be a taboo. If you dare want to question how you got the grades, there may
be a problem. Mr Speaker, but in other jurisdictions, you could call for your paper anytime and even after completion you could ask for your scripts, even after 10 years — you could always have access to your scripts.

Mr Speaker, I am happy that the Hon Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh is an Hon Member of this House, and I am happy that he is present on this occasion that we are discussing suicide on our campuses. I know that as part of his special focus of improving the relationship between lecturers and students on our university campuses, he would take this on board. It should not be a taboo for a student to find out from a lecturer why he had a certain grade, or why he performed in a certain manner.

So, I am sure that if lecturers really take matters on board and relate with their students well, some of these depressions could be dealt with. Secondly, we have been told that, counselling is a factor and that we do not have sufficient or adequate counselling facilities on our campuses. I would not limit it to only the tertiary levels but also the secondary schools and the Junior High Schools; children also commit suicide and also suffer from depression.

Mr Speaker, if we do not make it a policy right from primary, junior high school, senior high school through to the university, then of course, we may be having such problems. Mr Speaker, finally, parents expectation — sometimes, as parents, we expect too much from our children because we were first class students or we belong to a certain class, we seem not to be content with what our children achieve in school. So, when they are coming home, sometimes they fear that they have disappointed their parents because they did not do well and sometimes too, they think that the only option is to end it all, but that is not the solution.

Mr Speaker, so it is also our responsibility as parents, just as we think that there should be counselling on our campuses, we should also let our children understand that ravening clouds could never long be victorious. They would not continue to possess the skies and that if there are bad days, then they should accept it and if they do not do well, Daddy would not stop paying their schools. If they are not first today they would be first tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, we could even cite President Nana Akufo-Addo as an example, that, he never gave up. We could tell our children in schools that the President of the Republic went through elections, he did not succeed, but he did not give up. So, they would get the opportunity tomorrow so that they would endure.

Mr Speaker, the motto of St. Augustine’s College — Omnia Vincit Labor — Perseverance Conquers All — we should let our children understand that if they persevere, they would conquer and that they would make it no matter what. I am sure that, if as parents we take this on board, they would not even attempt suicide.

Mr Speaker, I would end by adding my voice to the call for the decriminalisation of attempted suicide — I have to be careful when it comes to some of these issues of the law — is an offence. I would want to add my voice to the call for that to be decriminalised because somebody in
that state needs help and has to be assisted, So, if the law would punish such a person, then I am afraid that he would rather end it, so that he would not face the consequences. I am very positive that if the appropriate referrals are made, the learned Attorney-General and Minister for Justice would take this matter on board and I am also very positive in the ability of the Rt Hon Speaker in dealing with matters such as these, especially when these are matters raised by this august House and its Hon Members on the floor.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity.