



Student Mental Health Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the University's Student Mental Health Policy is to provide a coherent institutional framework for tackling stigmatisations around mental health and for supporting students with mental health difficulties. It sets out the provisions that are central to the University's objective of supporting students that are experiencing mental health difficulties to minimise barriers that could hinder their academic progression or personal development. Specific guidance for students and staff can be found in the appendices to this document. Staff members who have concerns about support for their own mental health or of another staff member should seek advice from Human Resources about what support can be put in place.

1.2 This policy should be read and used in conjunction with other relevant University policies such as the Fitness to Study Policy, Fitness to Practice Policy, Dignity & Respect Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Disability Policy, all found [here](#).

2. Definitions and terminology

2.1 Mental health, as defined by Mind, refers to “the workings of your mind both in the way you feel and think. It relates to your understanding of yourself and the world around you. Mental health also refers to your ability to function in everyday life”.

2.2 Mental health conditions, as defined by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), “affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day”. For the purposes of this policy, the terms mental health conditions, mental health challenges, mental illness and mental ill-health shall be used interchangeably.

2.3 The nature of mental health difficulties is varied and can vary in severity. Estimates suggest that one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives. Mental health difficulties, as referred to in this policy, refer to experiencing a change in mental wellbeing which causes considerable distress and can impact daily functioning. Mental health diagnosis refers to a long-term mental health condition which impacts daily functioning.

2.4 The prevalence of mental illness in an academic environment is high and growing. The common age range of the onset of mental health difficulties is 18-24. Whilst a number of students enrol with a pre-existing mental health difficulty, others develop difficulties after they arrive, due to many factors such as lifestyle and environmental influences. The University plays a key role in recognising and supporting students with these difficulties.

3. University values and general commitment

3.1 The University is committed to providing a supportive environment where all students are treated fairly with dignity and respect including those experiencing mental health difficulties. The University recognises our responsibility in exercising our duty of care by promoting a culture that:

- encourages mental wellbeing and looking after your mental health;
- is non-stigmatising and promotes and communicates mental health in a positive light;
- allows students with mental health difficulties to be treated with respect and dignity;
- responds to situations purposefully and appropriately, when action is required; and
- encourages and manages mental health disclosures in a supportive and confidential manner.

3.2 The University's Student Support Services work collaboratively to ensure that students with mental health difficulties are supported to achieve their fullest potential. The Student Support Services also lead the Risk Management Review Group which ensures students

with complex mental health difficulties, and students deemed as high risk are monitored and risk is managed, by implementing appropriate mitigating actions and appropriate support.

3.3 Some individuals with a mental health difficulty are able to manage their challenges or symptoms effectively, and therefore may not need or want to disclose or utilise the services available at the University, while others may not be aware that they are experiencing the symptom of a mental health difficulty. Lack of self-awareness may be indicative of complex mental health presentations.

3.4 Mental health conditions that have persisting symptoms which have occurred over the last 12 months and have been medically diagnosed are considered a disability.

3.5 The University recognises and understands our legal obligations in relation to people with mental health difficulties. These are found primarily but not exclusively within disability legislation which sets out duty of care responsibilities. Disability legislation, along with other diversity and equal opportunity-related duties and responsibilities are dealt with in the [University's Equality and Diversity Policy](#).

3.6 Student Support Services provide staff with training and development opportunities to ensure students are supported effectively. It is vital that staff signpost students to Student Support Services when approached by a student who discloses a mental health difficulty or condition.

3.7 The University aims to provide effective and accessible mechanisms to support students. When a mental health condition is diagnosed the University will implement reasonable adjustments to enable students to succeed. The University monitors and evaluates mechanisms in place to ensure quality is assured and are legislatively compliant.

The University aims to provide clear information that is accurate and accessible. Student Support Services review existing mechanisms to maintain rigorous processes. Collaborative partnerships with external mental health organisations are continuously evaluated to ensure support extends beyond Student Support Services provision when and where required.

3.8 Whilst the University is committed to providing a supportive environment, it is important to recognise that it is an educational community and neither a mental health facility nor a therapeutic community. There are limits to the extent of the support that can be provided and it is not the responsibility of the University to replicate services that are provided by external public services. The University will therefore refer students as necessary to regional and national authorities/agencies/bodies/services.

3.9 Students who are 18 years or older are independent adults who are responsible for their own wellbeing and are expected to engage with others in the University context in ways that are mindful to the mental health needs of themselves and others. Students who have a mental health condition that deems them vulnerable, termed an 'adult at risk', may receive intervention from Student Support Services staff using the [Safeguarding Policy](#).

3.10 Students based outside of the UK will be encouraged and supported to gather information about their local agencies/authorities/bodies/services that may be of help, if and when having mental health difficulties.

4. Roles, rights and responsibilities

4.1 All students contribute to creating a community that does not stigmatise individuals on the basis of mental health difficulties. Being part of the University community involves students being understanding and aware that students have individual differences which require respect and tolerance. Specific guidance for students in this regard can be found in Appendix A.

4.2 Students are encouraged to take an active part in, and take responsibility for, communicating their needs and seeking support within the University. Students with mental health difficulties are encouraged to inform relevant staff of their difficulties and, if required, to avail themselves of the University's support services in order for appropriate arrangements to be put in place. Students with a long-term mental health condition can be eligible to receive additional support and reasonable adjustments. Students should consider disclosing a mental health difficulty and discuss this with either the Mental Health Adviser, Disability Adviser, Counsellor, Departmental Disability Coordinator (DDC), Student Wellbeing Officer, Academic Guidance Tutor, or other staff member with a pastoral role.

4.3 The University provides advice and support to students who are supporting friends and peers through mental health difficulties and conditions. Engaging external support such as a peer network can be invaluable. Advice and support for fellow students is also provided in Appendix A and can be sought, in confidence, from the University's Student Support Services.

4.4 Students wishing to find out about how the University processes their personal and sensitive information arising from the disclosure of a mental health difficulty should read the relevant University policy.

4.5 All staff should have an awareness of the impact mental health difficulties can have on students and should therefore be able to assist any student in any way possible to create a community that does not stigmatise. All staff should be familiar with and understand the University's support arrangements, policies and procedures for students with mental health difficulties and conditions, in particular the Disability Policy, the Dignity and Respect Policy and the Equality and Diversity Policy. Staff can also consider attending Mental Health First Aid trainings offered by a qualified, dedicated member of Student Support Services. Specific guidance for staff in this regard can be found in Appendix B.

4.6 All staff should exercise their duty of care in their dealings with students. If a person shows signs of a mental health difficulty, staff should offer or seek appropriate assistance as per Section 3. Furthermore, all staff should recognise the boundaries of their roles and refer students to Student Support Services.

4.7 All staff uphold confidentiality and exercise responsibility regarding disclosure; protect sensitive personal information in accordance with University policies and procedures and legal requirements; and understand what to do in circumstances where it may be necessary to breach expectations of confidentiality to enable wider disclosure, consulting the University Secretary where appropriate.

5. Application of the policy

5.1 This policy is applicable to the mental health and wellbeing of students at the University, to be utilised by both staff and students where necessary. This policy will be disseminated to staff and students when deemed appropriate, including on the University website, Moodle and in inductions and training.

5.2 Mental health in an academic context: Academic and support provision reflect the University's commitment to recognising that students with mental health difficulties are an integral part of the academic community, specifically in relation to:

- Confidentiality and disclosure
- Admission and selection
- Registration and induction
- Student accommodation
- Support services and assessment of needs
- Academic support
- Learning, teaching and assessment

- Progression and award
- Appendix C – ‘Further Sources of Information’, provides information on internal and external agencies and sources of support

5.3 The University has duties under the [Equality Act 2010](#) not to discriminate against anyone including students with a mental health difficulty or condition, thereby treating all students equally in relation to policies, procedures, resources and services.

5.4 For support and advice on prospective and current students with a mental health condition, staff can contact Student Support Services.

5.5 Reasonably supporting students with a mental health diagnosis: Any student with a mental health condition or disability is entitled to reasonable adjustments, to ensure that the student is not at any disadvantage in comparison to other students in examinations and academic assessments. These adjustments are made as reasonably practicable to ensure that it does not affect the validity of the academic assessment.

5.6 The University recognises the importance of these adjustments and takes responsibility for putting proactive measures in place to remove barriers in the academic environment for people with disabilities, including those with a mental health condition. This can include adjustments to the teaching and assessment environment such as lectures, seminars or presentations, exams, external visits and field trips.

5.7 Please refer to the [Disability Policy](#) for further information.

6. Managing risk related to mental health

6.1 The University has a duty of care to all our students, and staff, and has a responsibility to respond appropriately where risks are identified.

6.1 The categories of risk as defined by the University:

- Academic Risk – a threat to the student’s academic progress and finishing a degree due to mental health difficulties
- Social Risk – risk of disruption to the experience of other students around them, such as friends or peers
- Risk of harm to self/others - any risk of violence and aggression that would incur distress to themselves or risk of violence/aggression to anyone else
- Risk of suicide – any risk related to thoughts and/or actions of ending one’s life
- Risk of harm from others –any risk of abuse from others including physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, financial, domestic and modern slavery.

6.3 If any member of staff identify a student who may be at risk, they should contact anyone in Student Support Services immediately, who will be able to conduct an assessment of the student’s needs and actions that need to be taken.

6.4 If there is concern of immediate or harmful risk, follow the guidelines in Appendix C on dealing with risk or crises. The University will have specific practical limitations regarding risk management for international students located abroad. However, Student Support Services will endeavour to work with the relevant student on a case-by-case basis in order to stimulate student agency and engagement with the relevant local (to them) emergency or mental health services.

7 Fitness to Study process

7.1 The University has a number of procedures and practices, both formal and informal, that are used in relation to students with mental health difficulties.

7.2 The [Fitness to Study Policy](#) provides detailed information on the way in which the University’s procedures and practices impact students with mental health difficulties and the way in which these can be adjusted to meet students’ needs. Fitness to Study is a process

to support students presenting risk or who have complex needs which require additional support. The process is supportive and the aim is to enable the student to manage the difficulty more effectively, by identifying what additional support needs to be put in place.

7.3 The Mental Health Adviser or other members of Student Support Services will work with students with complex mental health needs to return to study, if they have interrupted their study through the Fitness to Study process or if they chose to interrupt by their own volition.

8 Complaints

8.1 Complaints from students will be addressed in accordance with the University's Student Complaints Procedure. The Student Wellbeing Officers, Students' Union or the University Secretary can give advice about the [Complaints Procedure](#).

8.2 The University's [Dignity and Respect Policy](#) specifically includes harassment relating to a person's disability.

8.3 A student complainant can be provided with support with this process by the Students' Union.

9 Implementation, monitoring and review

9.1 This policy and related procedures will continue to be monitored and reviewed in line with local and national guidelines pertinent to the subject matter.

9.2 This policy and associated procedures will be formally monitored by the Student Life Committee and Equality and Diversity Committee, and reported on annually to consider its effectiveness.

9.3 The policy will be fully reviewed every three years.

Appendices

Appendix A: Guidance for students

A1: General guidance on looking after your mental health

A1.1 Responding to change

Coming to University can be a difficult experience where some students find it hard to adjust and responding to this change can be difficult to manage or overwhelming. The University's Student Support Services can support you through this transition. Some of these changes include:

- Moving to a new area
- Separation from family and friends
- Establishing new social situations
- Managing a budget, or managing your own money, for the first time
- Combining academic study with family commitments
- Being solely responsible for yourself
- Increased academic pressures

For international students, the new environment typically may also include:

- Living in a different country
- Adjusting to a different culture

These changes can be experienced as exciting or daunting but managing them is a core part of settling into university. It is important to be aware that dealing with so much change can be stressful for many students and may contribute to feelings of anxiety.

A1.2 What to be aware of

Studying for a degree is personally and intellectually demanding. Some individuals can tolerate a lot of stress, whilst others may find this much more difficult. It will be easier to manage the stresses and strains of being a student if you are aware of how you react to physical and emotional stress. It will be particularly helpful to understand how your environment affects your stress – for example:

- What you eat and drink,
- How much sleep you get,
- Who you spend your time with,
- How much time you spend alone,
- How much exercise you get, and
- The types of activities you engage in

Learning how to balance the things that influence your energy levels, mood and stress will be valuable whilst studying at university. It is important to prioritise taking care of yourself as early on in stressful situations as possible, which can include utilising the support services available at the University.

A1.3 Thinking about our mental health

Our mental health is constantly changing and responding to both positive and negative influences in our lives, and the challenging situations that can occur at university can contribute to this.

The mental health quadrant below illustrates that we all have mental health, and therefore we all land somewhere along this quadrant. Aspects such as life events and coping mechanisms instigate constant movement between quadrants, and determine whether we are able to have good mental wellbeing, or whether we have a condition or not.



A2: What to do if concerned about your mental health

A2.1 If, during your time at the University, you become concerned about your mental health and potentially notice a difference in the way you are feeling or your ability to function day-to-day, consider the statements below and seek support from the internal support services and further sources of information section of this policy.

A2.2 Characteristics to consider include:

- Loss of interest in day-to-day tasks
- Feeling down or low
- Difficulties with sleeping or sleeping too much
- Having low energy levels
- Overeating or low appetite
- Not feeling good about yourself, or feeling disappointed in yourself
- Struggling with paying attention or concentrating
- Responding slower to the outside world
- Feeling restless and overactive in response to the outside world
- Feelings of harming yourself

A3: Supporting another Student with a mental health difficulty

A3.1 The above guidance also applies to any peers or friends you are worried about. If you notice a change in their behaviour along the lines of the characteristics laid out in A2.2, or if someone discloses something of concern to you, begin by telling the individual that you are concerned. Encourage your fellow student to make contact with Student Support Services.

If they agree, you could make first contact with someone on their behalf. If you can't find or aren't sure which is the most appropriate service, then speak to your Student Wellbeing Officer.

A3.2 It can be stressful supporting a friend; make sure that you look after yourself and seek support and help from the University's services for yourself.

Appendix B: Guidance for staff

B1: General guidance on supporting a student with mental health difficulties

In discussions with a member of staff, a student may disclose a mental health difficulty, including experiences of stress or anxiety.

The role of the Academic Guidance Tutor in this regard is defined in the Handbook. The Director of Studies has a similar role for research students. Staff members can discuss difficult issues in confidence with their line manager or the appropriate staff in Student Support Services. Staff should be clear about their boundaries, of how much help they can offer and where the student can access any additional help that might be needed.

In general, staff can support students with mental health difficulties by:

- Referring students to a function of Student Support Services
- Being understanding of the fact that external factors may impact on their mental Health
- Being aware that the student's mental health may change or fluctuate
- Being aware that concentration and attention can be affected
- Being sensitive to issues of confidentiality
- Being aware of what they can do when having concerns regarding the wellbeing of a student

Staff should ensure that they are aware of the range of professional support provided by the University listed in the Internal Support Services section of this Appendix, or refer the student to the Wellbeing team directly.

B2: Responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005. The Equality Act recognises that people with substantial and long-term mental health difficulties amounting to a disability require reasonable adjustments to be made. In addition to this, the Act places a responsibility on the University to develop an 'Anticipatory Duty' and this requires that general support mechanisms are in place at the University for all students who may have such a disability. The Data Protection Act 2018 and the University Data Protection Policy are relevant when considering how information is gathered and how it may be used in response to concerns about the wellbeing of a student.

If a mental health difficulty is regarded as a disability, the disclosure to a member of staff is regarded by law as a disclosure to the University. The University is then required to fulfil our legal obligations. There are exceptions to this rule and they include where a disclosure of a disability is made during counselling, or where a student expressly wishes other members of the University not to know.

Students cannot require the member of staff to limit the disclosure of a disability if the limitation would put the student's or anyone else's life or safety at risk. Students with a mental health difficulty should be positively encouraged to contact the Disability Adviser so that reasonable adjustments can be put in place to enable their learning and academic success. Please refer to the [Disability Policy](#) for further information.

B3: Confidentiality and disclosure

B3.1 Information relating to a person's mental health difficulty is classed as sensitive personal data. More information can be found about this in the [Data Protection Policy](#) which is available on the University website.

B3.2 If students with mental health difficulties wish to keep the existence or nature of their condition confidential or partially confidential, then the University will respect this

decision to the extent that it can do so without jeopardising the health and safety of the student or others.

B3.3 Staff can be provided with procedural guidance from Student Support Services on what to do if a student discloses a mental health difficulty. Student Support staff deliver training and offer guidance for staff on how to recognise the signs that a student may be experiencing imminent mental health difficulties, and which highlights the action which might be taken.

B3.4 Only when a person is considered to be a serious danger to themselves or a danger to others can the confidentiality rules be breached beyond the original agreement, or action taken without permission. This type of decision would normally be taken by staff in the Student Medical Centre, Student Support Services (Wellbeing Services or Disability Services) or other senior University staff. Breaching confidentiality is a serious matter and will only be done in a responsible manner by the University to help maintain our duty of care to the student in question and those around them. In these circumstances, information will only be shared with specific people or agencies on a need-to-know basis.

B4: Utilising Support Services and assessments of needs

B4.1 Support for students with mental health difficulties is provided by a range of staff, both face to face and remotely (phone or online). The Director of Student Support Services and in her absence the Head of Wellbeing oversees the management of complex cases through the weekly Risk Management Review Group (RMRG) proceedings. The risk is mitigated by implementing specialist support and intervention is provided by Student Support Services.

B4.2 Students can access specialist mental health support from the Mental Health Adviser who supports students with a mental health diagnosis or who are undergoing a psychiatric assessment. This includes assessing the student's needs, providing specialist mental health support and instigating appropriate referrals. This service is free and confidential.

B4.3 Students can access a range of confidential professional mental health advice and counselling services on-campus or online to help them address personal or emotional problems to aid recovery or self-management. This service is free and confidential.

B4.4 Students can receive wellbeing support from the Student Wellbeing Officers, who are the first line of support for any problems a student may have. This could range from financial guidance, advice and support for personal safety, including harassment and assault, or advice on accessing other support services.

B4.5 Students can also access medical support from the Student Medical Centre if they are registered there. They offer doctor and nurse-led services throughout term time.

B4.6 Students with mental health difficulties can contact the Disability Service in order to discuss their needs and any appropriate reasonable adjustments that may be required. If the student agrees to disclose this information, a Summary of Adjustments form is sent to the student's department which then transmits this information to the staff who teach that student. Please contact the Disability Services for further details (contact information in Internal Support Services section of the policy).

B4.7 The Roehampton Students' Union can provide a range of peer support and advice for students. They can be contacted through the Roehampton Student' Union Reception or their [website](#).

B4.8 International students based abroad will receive similar support from the University to students based in the UK and the support provided will be underpinned by UK law and ethical standards, including data protection regulations. They will be encouraged to access their local mental health community services in case of crisis or emergency and the risk management procedure will be exercised by involving their next of kin and communicating directly with their named health care professional. The state support available for international students will differ from the support services available to UK residents.

This protocol will be informed in advance to students based abroad and the support will be conditional to providing the relevant information of their next of kin and health professional in their country of residence. A written summary from their health professional of any Mental health medication, treatment or support received in the country of residence will be requested.

Student Support Services will follow this protocol in order to ensure good practice of the sector is followed and the student is aware of these limitations, and expectations are managed without compromising safety. Acute Risk or an emergency mental health response cannot be managed by student support services for students who are not resident in the UK. They will need to access local emergency services.

B5: Student Accommodation

B5.1 Students that have mental health difficulties who require accommodation will be given particular consideration when this is indicated in their application form. The Disability Services can provide support with this process.

B5.2 The University recognises that living away from home can be a source of stress and that living in student accommodation can appear daunting. Some students with mental health difficulties may find living in student accommodation particularly difficult. College Wardens and Flat Reps can assist or support students in residential accommodation who might experience mental distress.

B5.3 College Wardens and Flat Reps receive appropriate training from the Mental Health Adviser and are provided with information on sources of support and guidance for students in their flat experiencing mental health difficulties.

B6: Complaints

B6.1 A complaint may be resolved relatively informally at an early stage with the person(s) most directly concerned. Programme conveners, Directors of Studies, course tutors, Student Wellbeing Officers and other staff can also be called on to assist and advise at this informal stage. Where this is not possible, a formal complaint can be made using the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

B6.2 In the event that a student exhausts the University processes and is dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint, they can complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator [OIA] for Higher Education. Contact details and information about the OIA can be found at the following web address: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

B7: Disciplinary procedures

B7.1 All students are bound by the University's Student Code of Conduct and the Student Disciplinary Regulations. It is hoped that most concerns regarding a student's conduct can be raised informally in the first instance. Where a disability or mental health difficulty is a contributing factor, staff dealing with informal stages should seek advice from the Mental Health Adviser. If a breach of discipline is to be considered through formal proceedings, the Mental Health Adviser will ensure that the Student

Disciplinary Officers are aware of any relevant mitigating circumstances in relation to a mental health difficulty.

B7.2 University [student disciplinary regulations](#) set out the procedures relating to disciplinary action arising from misconduct.

B7.3 Students who are the subject of disciplinary proceedings can be accompanied by a supporter who may be another student, a member of the Students' Union or a member of staff of the University.