

A mentally healthy University - *now and in the future*

The Vision

The University of Sussex aims to create an optimal, and psychologically safe, learning and working environment for its students and staff, by acknowledging the symbiotic and cyclical relationship between health and wellbeing and their ability to achieve their full potential and be happy and productive at study and at work.

Our key values of inclusion and kindness will ensure that we focus on caring for each other and offer appropriate support across our diverse community. We will collaborate with each other and with external organisations to facilitate the best services available – especially for those living with mental health conditions. However, we will also have the integrity and courage to recognise the importance of nurturing self-agency and developing autonomy so that our health & wellbeing becomes the responsibility of us all.

LEARN	
1.	Transition into University We will create and strengthen ways of transitioning into, throughout, within and beyond University life whilst supporting multiple transitions throughout the student experience
1.1	We will talk about mental health and wellbeing earlier, in our open days, access and participation work, through to the admissions and post-offer process, creating opportunities for potential students to declare concerns, existing mental health conditions and for the University to initiate honest conversations about expectations around autonomy and appropriate/protective safeguarding requirements
1.2	We will conduct an institutional review of our welcome and transition experience which will include looking at methods of integration into the student community from the student perspective to ensure a personalised student journey and belonging in an inclusive community from the start. Our employability strategy will have <i>world readiness</i> as its core and be informed by an understanding of wellbeing principles that we will share with employers.
1.3	We will choose not to define additional transition points or intersections but instead provide support and awareness of activities for everyone throughout the lifecycle so that they can access them when they choose.
1.4	Continue to align support for mental health and wellbeing between students and staff to demonstrate commitment to all and create a stronger University community.

Staff	<i>Create a unified induction process across the University and Divisions; Divisional specific key knowledge training via peers and 'train the trainer'; tailored organisational development courses for the first 3-6 months; creating a start for a new member of staff to build a strong, Sussex career. Create opportunities for appropriate training and continued professional development for staff so that we can retain and develop the best in their field.</i>
2	<u>Learning, Teaching & Assessment</u> We will as a university, conduct a review of our Curriculum which through co-creation, looks at learning, assessment and the shape of the academic year through the lens of inclusivity, diversity and mental health and wellbeing.
2.1	We will review the exceptional circumstances process to ensure that this is accessible and used appropriately for students who need this when unwell or experiencing life events that will challenge their ability to study well.
2.2	We will ensure that both face-to-face and digital Academic Skills provision is robust, up-to- date inclusive, and accessible in a variety of ways
2.3	Through the access and participation plan, we will provide academic mentoring and a range of co-curricular activity to alleviate stress around peak periods
2.4	We will ensure that there are easily accessible and visible means of transferring from one academic course whilst retaining standards and academic rigour.
3	<u>Progression</u> We will provide tailored support for students progressing from one year of their course to another, recognising and acknowledging the personal and academic needs of our students at these points.
3.1	We will ensure that appropriate preparation, support and regular 'check-ins' are in place for all students on placements or participating in a period of study abroad. This will be embedded this into the programme of study to provide transparency with regards to preparation and expectation requirements
3.2	As part of our Welcome and Transition programme, we will provide support and essential tools for students moving from one year to another ensuring students feel prepared and have techniques to manage academic and wellbeing pressure points
3.3	We will work with our students to ensure that health and wellbeing is a priority through our revised Fitness to Study policy and that if a break from study is appropriate that a coordinated package of support is in place for a students' return to study to ensure a smooth transition back into the community. Conversely, on the rare occasion when a student cannot return to their studies, we will make every possible effort to communicate with external agencies (if appropriate), to ensure that any available external support can be accessed.

3.4	Through the access and participation plan we will create programmes of support for students repeating or resitting assessments, a module or a year.
SUPPORT	
4	<u>Support Services /Integration of Support across Sussex</u> We will deliver inclusive, accessible services that are cohesive, clear in their remit, meet a range of needs, are sufficiently resourced and are clearly communicated to students through a channel of choice via the Student Centre and online offer
4.1	We will introduce a 24/7 online mental health tool so that students can support each other as peers but also raise concerns in an environment that is safe and monitored by clinicians so that we can address risk
4.2	We will introduce a Report and Support tool, so that students can access information and support and choose whether to disclose hate crime, bullying, harassment, sexual violence, domestic abuse and discrimination. This tool will be part of an empowerment model and students can report anonymously, or with contact details maintaining control of what happens next.
4.3	We will reconfigure services to eliminate silo's and regularly review the effectiveness of the mental health and wellbeing services, adapting these to be current and as flexible as necessary, to ensure our aim of effective communication between services are met.
4.4	We will reduce risk by clearly defining the remit and limits of our services and carry out effective triage, to ensure that we continue to engage students and support them to best progress their university studies without overstepping into the role held by statutory services such as the NHS.
4.5	To meet our students increased mental health needs, we will invest in additional therapists and mental health practitioners and create a new Health and Wellbeing Centre to ensure clinical and therapeutic services are delivering services which are better integrated with external provision, from a modern and well-equipped space.
4.6	We will provide appropriate learning opportunities for students around mental health and wellbeing to increase their confidence when supporting (appropriately) a friend or loved one or around healthy relationships as a preventative measure in terms of wellbeing
4.7	We will review and make improvements to pertinent procedures including Fitness to Study Fitness to Return, Mental Health Pathway, safeguarding and the mechanisms to measure engagement and attendance to ensure they support this strategy.

4.8	We will revise and renew our web site containing information on mental health and wellbeing so that it is clear, concise and indicative of a range of support services, both internal and external including self-care activities matched to the student lifecycle. We will introduce the <i>channel of choice</i> approach so that all students can find the support that they need easily, which will simplify access and remove any barriers to help and a single point of service via the Student Centre and Online Student Support System
4.9	We will introduce an Online Student Support System to improve communication and transparency in the appropriate sharing of information across the institution and referrals between services, so that students don't have to repeat their story, unless they choose to do so.
Staff	<i>Providing effective and accessible support mechanisms to staff and managers, including training on Mental Health, adapting the appraisal process to ensure wellbeing is discussed and signposting undertaken, if necessary. With the development of a Mental Health Staff Forum resulting in the development of a Mental Health First Aiders Network, the promotion of mental health training to managers, and the implementation of a staff Wellbeing & Mental Health Policy, staff are effectively given the information and support they need at the University. Staff are also offered access to a 24/7 support service via telephone or app.</i>
5	<u>Risk and Prevention</u> We recognise that university life can be challenging and sometimes risky, so aim to create a compassionate culture where all aspects of this life are approached holistically, through the lens of wellbeing, so that stigma is reduced and students are encouraged to seek timely mental health/wellbeing support, while simultaneously being supported to develop their personal independence, autonomy, and self-agency.
5.1	We will ensure that we have protocols in place to respond to student mental health crisis and to communicate across internal teams and statutory organisations to reduce risk and improve safety for students
5.2	We will monitor statistics relevant to risk and evaluate/review services and protocols to improve and ensure consistency in our response to crisis.
5.3	We will ensure that the safeguarding policy and guidance is implemented across the University and throughout the student journey from pre-admission through living in our accommodation until departure.
5.4	We will review the curriculum, assessment and teaching and learning to eliminate the 'bunching' of assessments, create more time for students to study in the academic year, leading to a reduction in stress and a better paced workload.
5.5	We will use systems and processes for the early identification of students who may be at risk and ensure these are integrated into new systems in development.
5.6	We will ensure that we make our teaching and learning environments safe psychological spaces reducing anxiety and promoting engagement

5.7	We will aim to reduce risk in our student community by looking for opportunities to reduce harm in areas such as substance dependency, sexual and domestic abuse
<i>Staff</i>	<i>Identifying and reducing the workplace factors or stigmas that have a negative effect on wellbeing, as well as identifying the barriers to staff seeking help and working to remove these.</i>
6	<u>External Partnerships and Pathways</u> We will continue to build strong partnerships with local and national partners to support the delivery of a connected and cohesive mental health and wellbeing provision
6.1	We will develop stronger and more diverse links with external partners including the NHS and local mental health services to create clearer pathways for staff and students whilst stimulating more collaboration
6.2	We will create a more strategic partnership with University of Brighton and other local higher education providers to advocate for increased investment in local mental health services that may be oversubscribed whilst utilising the partnership to bid for external funding for the mutual benefit of our student communities
6.3	We will aim to develop a joint 'care pathway' with both the NHS and other HEIs locally to cover the assessment and management of the mental health conditions experienced by students.
6.3	We will work with local agencies within the UUK Suicide Safer Universities framework to develop a suicide prevention and response plan, recognising that it takes a whole community to support people who are struggling to see a connection to life
6.4	We will draw closer to our primary care providers to ensure the services provided reflect the needs of our diverse community and are fit for purpose
6.5	We will draw on best practice nationally and internationally as we enhance our own mental health and wellbeing services
<i>Staff</i>	<i>Ensure staff are well trained at supporting students to access the pathways</i>
7	<u>Information Sharing</u> We will maintain a clear and appropriate balance between autonomy and a students' right to choose and the sharing of information with those who can provide appropriate support and reduce risk to life

7.1	We will continue to work closely with the NHS practice on campus as well as secondary NHS care to devise processes which will allow us to share appropriate information between organisations, with a student's consent in the interests of student' safety and care.
7.2	We recognise that students' families may be the most important provider of support and information around assessment and diagnosis. We also recognise that sometimes the family may be the main source of a students' problems. We will always seek to work with students' emergency contact and/or network together with primary or secondary care providers on the basis of vital interests or with a student's consent in order to share critical information and work together to find solutions that are within the students' best interests. All of our processes, procedures and pathways focussed around mental health and wellbeing will document and encourage appropriate information sharing.
7.3	Our confidentiality and information exchange will be transparent and clear for students and in the event that a student is too unwell to provide consent. Clear protocols and close working with our DPO will allow us to share information appropriately with those who can help to reduce risk.

WORK

8	<p><i>Staff Wellbeing</i> <i>Connect the staff and student mental health and wellbeing strategies to ensure appropriate tiered training and support across the organisation is given for mutual benefit</i></p>
	<p><i>We will create opportunities for the staff mental health forum and the student mental health network to connect and identify areas for collaboration and messaging so that a level of consistency is maintained.</i></p> <p><i>We will encourage colleagues who are creating wellbeing initiatives to map these onto the wellbeing framework – the five ways to wellbeing - so that staff can see a defined wellbeing offer throughout the year that is reflective of the staff and student lifecycle (s)</i></p> <p><i>We will clarify the expectations of staff in different roles in relation to mental health and wellbeing so that they are clear to staff and students.</i></p> <p><i>We will take a strategic approach to staff training relating to mental health and wellbeing, identifying appropriate levels of training and priorities across the whole staff community.</i></p> <p><i>We will include students in training design and delivery as well as the development or selecting of resources seeking feedback from staff and students throughout to inform our approach.</i></p> <p><i>We will remove any barriers to students or staff seeking support and continue to adapt ways to access this support to make it as easy and worry free as possible.</i></p> <p><i>Staff: Empowering staff to manage their own health and wellbeing in a proactive way, using the employee wellbeing app, their 1-2-1s with managers, communicating with Mental Health First Aiders? and encouraging training to understand and respond to mental health and wellbeing concerns.</i></p>

9	<u>Staff Development</u>
	<p><i>We will provide an increased offer of Mental Health and Wellbeing training courses as part of our core Organisational Development package and encourage all staff, but particularly managers and staff who deal directly with students, to not only undertake these but the schedule regular refreshers.</i></p> <p><i>We will encourage staff to train as Mental Health First Aiders, to create a strong network within the University network of support and understanding of wellbeing and mental health concerns, including how to spot the signs.</i></p> <p><i>Create informal meeting spaces for staff to discuss best practice and concerns with each other.</i></p>
LIVE	
10	<p>Proactive Interventions and a Mentally Healthy Environment</p> <p>We will initiate and maintain an early, open and ongoing dialogue about mental health, whilst developing a coordinated approach to identifying students who are at risk</p>
10.1	<p>We will introduce the Foresight’s Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project as a framework https://whatworkswellbeing.org/evidence-gap-five-ways-to-wellbeing that will be mapped onto the student lifecycle and become the University’s evidence based, applicable to all, visible and proactive wellbeing offer. We will pull existing initiatives into this framework whilst co-creating new activities to support Wellbeing. We will advertise this framework widely, using targeted social media campaigns, the Student Hub and creating a theme around this in the Student Centre exhibition space and digital screens.</p>
10.2	<p>We will co-create a robust communication strategy that includes <i>channels of choice</i> ensuring the offer is clearly visible to all students and staff</p>
10.3	<p>Develop and deliver training for our staff and students</p>
10.4	<p>We will develop a series of online videos and guidance for staff and students about how to recognise early signs of risk and how to initially respond</p>
10.5	<p>We will capitalise on our physical environment and create more spaces that support wellbeing and a sense of community whilst communicating the importance of self-care and life balance. Further work on this will include use of the new reflection courtyard within the Student Centre for personal reflection, meditation and yoga. Local communities will be encouraged to engage further with the campus community by offering local produce, or by attending or becoming involved in student events or activities.</p>

10.6	As part of the pro-active wellbeing offer we will create a range of psycho-educational workshops that students can access for self-care as well as ensuring that support services are visible and easy to access so that timely interventions are made before issues escalate
Staff	Encouraging early intervention with managers when concerns about wellbeing or mental health are raised. We will ensure managers have access to training on mental health and are offered refresher courses on a regular basis and encourage members of staff to train to be Mental Health First Aiders.
11	<u>Social Integration and Belonging</u> We will continue to improve safety both physically and psychologically which facilitates openness and integration within diverse communities which in turn fosters belonging and connectedness
11.1	Through a robust Welcome and Transition programme both pre-arrival, arrival and post-arrival we will create facilitated opportunities for students to identify friendship groups and connections with peers
11.2	We will work to ensure that the Student Centre feels 'like home' and a safe space where students can try new things and join new activities which create more opportunity for making friendships
11.3	We will work with the academic community to foster cohort identity and belonging so that students feel that their course is an 'anchor' from which to launch.
11.4	Using the student voice, student services data and evidence from therapeutic services, identify cohorts where isolation or feelings of loneliness have been identified and together with the Student Union co-create pro-active interventions to support diverse communities and cohorts
12	<u>Residential Accommodation</u>
12.1	We will co-create with our students to provide opportunities for peer support in student accommodation such as mediation between flat mates, and workshops that may be useful to support all students
12.2	We will co-create a residential life programme that engages students in activity that builds belonging and connection with their residence and each other
12.3	We will continue to review and redefine with our changing community, the aims and parameters of the Residential Life Team to ensure a safe service is delivered within the boundaries that we are able to operate within as a university.

13	<u>Physical Environment</u> We will continue to promote and provide activity within areas that offer a variety of safe and secure spaces to enhance wellbeing whilst proactively including our students in estates developments
13.1	We will ensure that there are a variety of different spaces on campus that promote mindfulness and wellbeing and that these are well known amongst our students
13.2	The Student Centre will provide spaces for connection and interaction as well as calm and quiet both within the centre and outside in the courtyard garden
13.3	Safety and security on campus will remain a priority with physical features including lighting and seating reviewed and monitored for condition and safety throughout the year
13.4	We will create opportunities for students to co-create and co-design key spaces such as the Student Centre, Health Centre and additional estates projects within the West Slope development
ENABLING THEMES	
	LEADERSHIP
14	<u>Leadership, Strategy & Policy</u> We will harness the strengths of existing and diverse communities within and beyond campus and commit to champion a whole university approach to supporting staff and student mental health and wellbeing.
14.1	The [University Executive Group] will provide formal governance oversight of the strategy supported by council under their Learn to Transform remit.
14.2	We will continue to work with the Students' Union, the student Mental Health Network and students to ensure student voices and their stories are heard throughout the development and implementation of the strategic objectives.
14.3	We will bring together leaders within existing diverse student communities to ensure consolidated and agile services for mental health and wellbeing

14.4	We will utilise existing resources efficiently and identify opportunities to partner with organisations in the approach for national funding in relevant areas
<i>Staff</i>	<i>Promote a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing through the University's leaders and line managers</i>
15	<u>Student Voice & Participation</u>
15.1	We will implement a student voice platform where we can hear and respond to student feedback throughout the year whilst acting on ideas and suggestions to improve and evolve the mental health and wellbeing offer as a University.
15.2	We will use the student voice platform to introduce a student wellbeing 'pulse check' during the first semester designed in collaboration with academic staff and the Students' Union to produce baseline data which will be used to illicit trends and priority areas where additional support may be needed
16	<u>Inclusivity and Intersectional Mental Health</u>
16.1	We understand that every individual is different and the steps/outside influences on their mental health and wellbeing are unique. We will be agile and continue to adapt services to ensure the entire University community feel equally cared for.
	<u>Research, Innovation and Dissemination</u>
17	<u>Research, Innovation and Dissemination</u> We will use data and research expertise within our community to inform and support our approach to mental health and wellbeing
17.1	Using a range of mechanisms we will audit services, design, usage and satisfaction
17.2	We will work with researchers and practitioners in this field to incorporate new and emerging best practice into our operational plan that will be underpin this strategy.
17.3	We will monitor progress of this strategy and accompanying operational plan and review regularly via the [UEG].
<i>Staff</i>	<i>We will use data and metrics to target and support wellbeing initiatives for staff</i>