

1. POLICY TITLE: MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

2. PURPOSE

This policy recognises the link between mental health and academic success, retention, and the overall student experience. Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU) is committed to early intervention and prevention of mental health crises, whilst promoting a positive mental health culture across Ulster University.

UUSU recognised that mental health challenges can be influenced by financial pressures, housing issues, academic workload, change of culture and environment, and social belonging; Therefore, UUSU will ensure all campaigns involve a Mental Health strand.

This policy will act to reduce the stigma around mental health and will mandate UUSU to advocate for mental health provisions across the institution which are accessible to all students at Ulster University.

3. DEFINITIONS

See Appendix One

4. POLICY PRINCIPLES / COMMITMENTS

What is our core principles or stances on this topic.

- UUSU recognises that positive mental health is essential to academic success, student retention and a positive overall student experience at Ulster University.
- UUSU is committed to early intervention and prevention approaches to mental health, acknowledging the impact of financial, housing, academic, cultural and social factors on student wellbeing.
- UUSU is committed to reducing stigma and advocating for mental health services and supports that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all students.
- UUSU will take a student-led and informed research-based approach.

5. OBJECTIVES

What are the two/three core objectives we want to achieve?

- Foster an environment at Ulster University that promotes open conversations around mental health and challenges stigma at all levels of student life.
- Ensure that mental health considerations are integrated into all UUSU campaigns, initiatives and representative work.
- Advocate for improved and accessible mental health services across Ulster University.

6. ACTIONS

What do we plan to do in order to fulfil this policy?

- Develop and deliver mental health awareness campaigns, early intervention initiatives and mental health training for all UUSU elected students.
- Ensure all UUSU campaigns and projects include clear mental health consideration.
- Maintain an accessible Mental Health and Wellbeing support page on the UUSU website and across all social media link trees.
- Represent student needs to Ulster University to improve access, waiting times, communication, and resourcing for mental health and wellbeing services, including the UUSU Advice Bureau.
- Campaign on cost of living, housing, academic workload, and inclusion, amplify student lived experience, and lobby external organisations and government to prioritise mental health and wellbeing.
- Develop, publish, and uphold a Mental Health Charter outlining UUSU's commitments to wellbeing, accessibility, early intervention, and stigma reduction.

7. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Who is the officer lead? Who is the campaign lead? What staff member is supporting this policy?

- Student Executive and the wider organisation

8. PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Who will we be working with to fulfil this policy?

- UUSU
- Student Wellbeing
- UUSU Advice bureau
- Academic schools and faculties
- External organisations
- Student council, societies and clubs

9. MONITORING & EVALUATION

How will we keep those responsible, accountable?

A quarterly review will take place on this policy with partners and stakeholders to ensure that this policy is up to date and impactful for our student base. Regular meetings will be held with students and Student wellbeing to ensure the policy commitments are being fulfilled correctly and effectively. All progress will be reported to Student Council for feedback and support.

10. REPORTING & TRANSPARENCY

Where will this policy report to?

- Updates on implementation of this policy will be reported to Student Council on a quarterly basis.
- Updates and progress will be published on the UUSU website and social media channels.
- Student feedback and concerns can be submitted via the UUSU website and social channels.

11. ASSOCIATED POLICIES / DOCUMENTS

Are there any pieces of legislation or research to support this policy? Any evidence needed?

UUSU Legacy Mental Health Action Plan

Review of Mental Health Policies in Northern Ireland: Making Parity a Reality

12. APPENDIX ONE

Definitions in depth:

DEFINITIONS

Mental Health - Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community (**Mental health**)

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is not just the absence of ill health. It includes the way that people feel about themselves and their lives. In the absence of a singular definition, it is generally thought to be made up of things like the experience of positive emotions, people's perceptions that the things they do in their lives are meaningful and worthwhile, and life satisfaction. Wellbeing is influenced by physical and mental health and in turn has an influence on the experience and outcomes of different health conditions (**Wellbeing - NHS England Digital**)

Mental distress

Mental distress denotes a condition of emotional pain or psychological discomfort that impacts an individual's thoughts, feelings, or actions. It can encompass emotions like anxiety, sadness, fear, irritability, confusion, or a sense of hopelessness. This distress is frequently a response to stressful life circumstances such as trauma, loss, pressure, or significant changes. While it can occasionally be a normal part of life, chronic or severe mental distress can disrupt daily functioning, relationships, and overall health. If not addressed, it may escalate into more serious mental health issues like depression or anxiety disorders. (**What is mental distress and why does it happen? | Hola Health**)

Early intervention

Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes. (**What is early intervention? | Early Intervention Foundation**)

Crisis support

Crisis support services generally constitute an integral component of mental health and psychosocial support, but specifically they are a discrete form of psychosocial support. They are universal, immediate support services for people experiencing elevated distress and emotions surrounding experiences or difficulties in their lives that they are struggling to cope with. They are a complementary service stream to the provision of mental health treatments. (**What are crisis support services? - Centre for Suicide PreventionCentre for Suicide Prevention**)

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