

Student Mental Health Policy

(2006 – Updates: 2016/2019/2022)

Owner: Dean of Students (or nominee)

Author: This policy was originally written and approved in 2006 by the Mental Health Policy Task Group. It has subsequently been updated (2016). Task Group members: Hugh Clarke (Counselling Service); Tony Conibear (EFIB); Andy Mitchell (Students' Union: Welfare Officer); Anne Morris (CAPD); Jennifer Newton (DASS); Anna Packham (Disabilities & Dyslexia Service); Karen Taylor Burge (DOED); Julie Walkling (Head of Student Services): Chair; Digby Warren (CAPD). Amendments and update: 2016 - James Lewis (Counselling Service) and 2019 – Yannis Andreadakis; Bjorg Hermannsdottir; Effy Westenra (Counselling Service); Sarah Richardson (DDS). 2022 Review Una Fairbrother (Deputy Dean of Students), Lara Bulut (Head of Student Services), Gillian Veschini (Operations Manager)

Version: 1.3

Date: 01.11.2022

Review date: 01.08.23

Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Rationale.....	3
3. Definition of Mental Health.....	4
4. Principles.....	4
5. Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
5.1. Staff.....	5
5.2. Students.....	5
6. Pre-admission and Admission.....	5
7. Entry and Induction.....	6
8. Accommodation.....	7
9. Support and Services for Students.....	7
10. Teaching, Learning and Assessment.....	8
11. Crisis Incidents, Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures.....	9
11.1. Crisis incidents.....	9
11.2. Complaints.....	10
11.3. Disciplinary Procedures.....	10
12. Interruption To and Completion of Studies.....	10
13. Training, Support and Guidance.....	11
14. Monitoring and Review.....	12

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the of principles, procedures and guidance for working with students with mental health issues. It is strongly aligned with the UUK “Student mental wellbeing in higher education: Good practice guide” (2015), the London Met Counselling Service Healthy Campus Initiative manifesto (2018), the London Met Welbeing Framework (2022) and policies from several other higher education [HE] institutions. Sections of the policy are set out using the “student lifecycle” as a scheme.

2. Rationale

Widening participation, increased student numbers, and a range of other factors have been associated with a notable increase in the numbers of students with significant mental health difficulties entering HE. There has been an accompanying concern about the general mental well-being of students, reflected in recent studies and policy recommendations¹. These point to the need for institutional policies that address the continuum from promoting positive mental well-being to working with students with severe mental health difficulties.

London Metropolitan is a relatively large institution, with a student body that is comparatively less resourced in terms of social and cultural capital. The university is located in a densely populated urban setting, with the alienation and fragmentation that this brings in terms of emotional and mental well-being. Staff increasingly report mental health related issues arising, in their contact with students.

In general, such students will fall into four main categories:

- Students who seem depressed and unhappy;
- Students who appear to have significant mental health difficulties but who do not acknowledge this;
- Students who have declared or acknowledge their mental health difficulties.
- Students in this latter group are likely to fall within the legal definition of ‘disabled’ and may be entitled to reasonable adjustments made to ensure that the curriculum is fully accessible.

At the same time, the University has a duty of care towards all students and seeks to

promote the mental well-being of all.

3. Definition of Mental Health

Mental health refers to “the capacity to live in a resourceful and fulfilling manner, having the resilience to deal with the challenges and obstacles which life presents”ⁱⁱ. Mental health difficulties exist across a spectrum of states of mind and behaviours, from temporary responses to painful events through to more debilitating and persistent conditions.

Clinical definitions of recognised mental health problems are generally considered unhelpful for documents such as this. It is important to avoid any tendencies to pathologise students and, rather, to concentrate on the issues of response and support. Many people with mental health issues can and do lead fulfilling lives.

For institutional purposes it is sufficient to distinguish between students with mental health difficulties or illness who can usually be supported in various ways in the course of their studies, and those who may need to withdraw temporarily or permanently. More specific definitions are helpful only to clinicians when considering treatment.

4. Principles

London Metropolitan University is committed to offering good support for all its students. In relation to mental health, we shall endeavour to:

- promote student mental well-being
- offer students a range of support that is individually tailored and includes reasonable adjustments if required
- raise awareness among students and staff of mental health issues, services & procedures
- create a non-stigmatising, inclusive and respectful culture
- develop policy, informed by liaison with students, staff and relevant external agencies
- ensure monitoring and review of policy and practice

It should be noted that, as the University is an educational community, there will be

reasonable limits to the support that can be offered, given our resources and the necessity to balance the needs of individuals against the needs of the wider student and staff bodies.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Staff

All staff are expected to:

- exercise duty of care in their dealings with students; if a person shows signs of mental health difficulty, staff should offer or seek appropriate assistance (see guidelines in [Safeguarding Policy](#))
- treat each student with dignity
- recognise the boundaries of their roles, knowing where, when and how to refer on
- uphold confidentiality and exercise responsibility regarding disclosure (see 7.4)
- contribute towards building a non-stigmatising and inclusive community

5.2. Students

All students should help towards creating a non-stigmatising and inclusive community

- Students with mental health difficulties are encouraged to avail themselves of the range of internal and/or external support services, and to inform relevant staff if unable to fulfil academic commitments, so that the University can provide them with appropriate personal and academic support
- Students who are supporting friends and peers experiencing mental health issues should take cognisance of their personal limits and know where, when and how to refer on (see guidelines in [Safeguarding Policy](#))

6. Pre-admission and Admission

- 6.1. Any prospectus, open-day literature or other promotional material should contain positive statements declaring the University's commitment to fostering a non-stigmatising, inclusive learning community and to working with students

with mental health difficulties, to identify and address their individual needs. The right to study is fully acknowledged by the University, except in certain cases linked to some professional programmes made clear in the relevant literature.

- 6.2. At application, or as soon as possible thereafter, prospective students with disability related support-needs, including mental health difficulties, are encouraged to disclose this information to the University's Disabilities and Dyslexia Service (DDS). DDS staff can then make relevant tutors and service staff aware of the situation, helping to provide initial support if necessary. The University's Disabilities and Dyslexia Service and the Counselling Service should be promoted to facilitate an early referral, if required.
- 6.3. An assessment will be carried out by the DDS and can also take place at any stage in the application cycle, including prior to an offer. This confidential discussion with a Counsellor or Disabilities Advisor will help determine what support the University is able to provide, to meet specific needs. It is also used to clarify what recommendations will be communicated to tutors and other University staff. Prospective students can decide whether this constitutes adequate support before accepting a place.
- 6.4. All personal information on a student held within the University is confidential. Explicit permission must be obtained for this information to be disseminated, except in extreme circumstances. As per existing procedures regarding the Internal Needs Assessment Report [[INAR](#)], with the consent of the individual student (who has disclosed mental health difficulties) a copy of the report is sent to the person's tutors and other relevant service staff.
- 6.5. Students should be given advice relating to any additional support for which they may be eligible (e.g. the Disabled Students Allowance), in order to pursue their chosen course of study.

7. Entry and Induction

- 7.1. Staff in the University (School Offices, Student Services, Admissions teams) are available to guide new students through the process of enrolment and induction at the beginning of each semester, helping to reduce stress factors.
- 7.2. Student induction documentation and presentations should acknowledge heightened levels of stress experienced by most students during this settling-

in period. Such information should also be clear about sources of advice to deal with problems that may be encountered. This should also apply to Module Handbooks, course related Weblearn resources, lectures, seminars etc. for modules encountered by students new to the University.

8. Accommodation

The University does not provide accommodation to students, but staff are available to help signpost, advice, and guide students with regard to external accommodation. To help alleviate stress associated with accommodation, the University (via the [Student Money and Accommodation team](#)) will provide information about available accommodation, transport links and financial options, including guidance to students on inspecting local housing.

9. Support and Services for Students

9.1. Mental health issues can impinge on both academic and personal aspects of study, and the University is committed to providing support in both areas.

Students have access to individual advice and support from a range of staff and specialised services, including:

- Heads of Student Experience
- Course Leaders
- Module Leaders
- [Academic Mentors](#)
- [The Counselling Service](#)
- [Disabilities and Dyslexia Service](#)
- [Student Money and Accommodation Advice](#)
- [The Students' Union](#)
- [Admission](#)
- [School Offices](#)
- [International Support team](#)
- [Libraries](#) and [IT services](#)

9.2. Students with disabilities, including mental health difficulties, have access to specialist support via the [Disabilities and Dyslexia Service](#) and the [Counselling Service](#). This support may be combined with the services of the

[Careers and Employability Team](#), to help students gain a clearer sense of 'life purpose', career skills and options while also attending to personal issues related to career matters (e.g. confidence, study difficulties affecting course performance).

- 9.3. Provision for meeting the needs of diverse students is also monitored by the Heads/Deans of Schools and Heads of Student Experience for whom one is located in each of the Schools.
- 9.4. Students will be provided with access to information and guidelines about internal services and external agencies and ways of recognising, responding to and helping peers who might be experiencing mental health difficulties (see [Safeguarding Policy](#))
- 9.5. All staff will have access to this information, which can be found on the University's website ([Safeguarding Policy](#)).

10. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- 10.1. The University supports an inclusive, non-discriminatory, non-stigmatising practice in teaching and learning activities by providing teaching staff with mandatory inclusivity training and good practice guidelines (see Safeguarding Policy) on supporting students with mental health issues and promoting mental well-being.
- 10.2. Toward the same goals, the University will provide students with awareness of inclusivity, access to student resources and information pertaining to mental health and wellbeing issues and services (see Safeguarding Policy and section 13).
- 10.3. Of relevance to this policy; aimed at supporting inclusivity and equality; the University also is committed to the provision of an inclusive teaching and learning delivery. This will ensure that the diverse learning styles of all of our students are addressed. An inclusive teaching and learning provision also encourages the use of a range of appropriate assessment methods to enable students to excel in their areas of ability, without overburdening them.
- 10.4. The University has an obligation to ensure that its assessment methods do not exacerbate a student's mental health difficulties. The University will give due consideration to making reasonable adjustments to assessment methods² for students with mental health difficulties. Some of these may

relate to general practice, while others may relate to the needs of individual studentsⁱⁱⁱ. Support will be offered to help students cope with exam and assessment pressures.

- 10.5. If a student fails to submit coursework on time or to sit an examination due to an episode associated with mental health difficulties, s/he would usually qualify for mitigating circumstances. However, assessment regulations state that if a condition or situation is known and has continued for some time, this would not be accepted as a valid reason for mitigating circumstances, because the student is expected to manage the situation. In the case of students who are managing difficulties associated with long-term mental illness (such as schizophrenia), reasonable adjustments to assessment tasks should be made, in consultation with the Disabilities and Dyslexia Service.
- 10.6. With regard to work and practice placements, the placement provider has a duty of care whilst students are on placement. University staff from participating Schools will provide advice and support to students with mental health issues and liaise with the providers about the students' needs, bearing in mind confidentiality and disclosure policies^{iv}.

11. Crisis Incidents, Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures

11.1. Crisis incidents

Whilst rare, there will be instances where a student's behaviour gives cause for concern. Such instances will range from self-harm or suicidal intentions, to incidents of extreme or worrying behaviour, where there is reason to believe that the students themselves, or others, may be harmed and in immediate danger. If there is an immediate risk to life, violence or other emergency situation, you must contact 999 and raise this immediately with a LoSO or the LeSO followed by completing the reporting form.

A policy and protocol for dealing with such incidents is available in our [Safeguarding Policy](#)). In summary, where there are immediate concerns about harm to the student or to others, the emergency services should be called. Concerns should normally be reported in the first instance to the Local Safeguarding Officer (LoSO) or the deputy LoSO in the School/Professional Services Department (PSD), who will liaise with the

relevant Lead Safeguarding Officer and provide you with support and advice and guidance. The individual raising the concern should also ensure that they complete the reporting form.

11.2. Complaints

The University has a comprehensive complaints procedure under which any student may voice her/his concerns. Students may feel that an actual or perceived mental health difficulty may have given rise to unfair treatment, in which case the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) set out in the Student Zone should be followed.

Formal complaints must be made on a Complaint Form and sent to casework@londonmet.ac.uk. Complaints regarding the admissions process or decisions should be submitted directly to the Director of Admissions and Enrolment.

11.3. Disciplinary Procedures

The University's expectations regarding student behaviour are set out in [Student Conduct regulations](#). Mental health difficulties do not excuse students from the requirement to comply with the collegiate University's Student Conduct regulations.

This can often be a difficult area with regard to breaches of conduct thought likely to be a consequence of mental health difficulties. The University is committed to treating all such instances sympathetically, whilst balancing the respective needs to operate a fair and consistent code of conduct for all students, observe our duty of care and ensure the health and safety of all. Under the [Student Conduct Policy and Procedure](#), where the alleged misconduct arises or appears to arise from a physical or mental health condition (including from a failure to take prescribed medication), the allegation shall be dealt with in accordance with the University's [Fitness to Study Policy](#). This can be done at any stage of the procedure where issues giving cause for concern may come to light. In cases of behavioural misconduct that would qualify as a 'crisis incident', the Crisis Incident Policy and Protocol should also be followed. See section '11.1' (above), and [Safeguarding Policy](#).

12. Interruption To and Completion of Studies

12.1. The University has in place procedures that enable students temporarily to

take a break from their studies (or parts of their studies) if the student's ability to perform is being adversely affected by a mental health issue. Before taking a break, or withdrawing, the student should be given the opportunity to explore the implications of the decision. More specifically, Academic Staff, the [School Offices](#), and [Student Services](#) may be able to guide and advise the student about such issues as: (a) the implications for assessment, (b) the accumulation of credits towards a degree or other qualifications, (c) financial implications and fee payment options, (d) module availability, (e) the emotional dimensions of their experience. In some instances, it may be helpful for the student to consider a change of programme.

- 12.2. While the University will make every possible effort to support such students, their return to study will be conditional on the student being able to meet the [Academic Regulations](#). The decision regarding their possible re-admission rests with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) in consultation with the relevant academic Head of School and The Dean of Students. Students who wish to return to studies following a break are advised to make contact with their School Office and with appropriate support services at least three months before returning.
- 12.3. If during in the process of taking a break from studies, a student discloses information, or behaves in a way, that would be sufficient to generate a response under the Fitness to Study Regulations (irrespective of whether these regulations have been applied previously), then procedures for returning to study under the Fitness to Study Regulations, could apply. See [Fitness to Study Regulations](#), section 'Return to Studies'.

13. Training, Support and Guidance

In terms of the goals of this Policy, it is important to acknowledge that students and staff have a shared responsibility to keep themselves informed and actively aware of mental health issues, support systems, relevant procedures and training of the University. Support provision to students is partly disseminated by the Heads of Student Experience in each School and complemented by other PSDs, e.g. [Student Services](#), [Libraries](#) (for more information please see [Safeguarding Policy](#)). With regard to staff development and support, this is provided by the Centre for Professional & Educational Development ([CPED](#)), [Student Services](#), e.g.

[Counselling Service](#), [DDS](#), University-wide Learning and Teaching workshops and Weblearn training modules.

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and updated by [Student Services](#), the Dean of Students (or nominated person), and University Secretary's Office, with the aim of making recommendations to teaching staff, PSDs and other committees and relevant structures (e.g. Steering Groups and Staff Development).

ⁱ Healthy Campus Initiative (2018), Andreadakis, Y. (ed.). London Metropolitan University; Thorley, C (2017). Not By Degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK's universities. IPPR. Retrieved from <https://www.ippr.org/publications/not-by-degrees> ; Suicide-Safer Universities (2018). Universities UK & Papyrus. Retrieved from <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-sector-practitioners-on-preventing-student-suicides>

ⁱⁱ Leeds University, Ahead 4 Health

ⁱⁱⁱ In the case of professional courses the Course Leader should consult with the relevant qualification body, local policy (for example, Fitness to Practice Policy) as well as the Disabilities and Dyslexia Service.

^{iv} Disclosure requires prior discussion with, and the consent of, the student, even though placement providers are often subject to the same legislation and confidentiality requirements