

Student Mental Wellbeing

UPR EQ07 version 07.0

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 07.0 of UPR EQ07, with effect from 1 September 2020.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

Section 4 has been amended to refer to the new Support to Study policy for students presenting with a complex mental illness (UPR EQ11 'Support to Study').

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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1 Introduction

This document incorporates, as appropriate, the agreed institutional terminology set out in UPR GV08¹ and should be read in conjunction with UPR EQ03².

2 Scope

The policies and procedures set out in this document apply across the whole of the University's educational provision and are intended to support students experiencing mental health problems.

(Notes for guidance:

- Unless it is inappropriate or unhelpful to do so, this document uses the term 'mental health' throughout. The term 'mental illness' is used specifically to

¹ UPR GV08 'Glossary of Approved University Terminology'

² UPR EQ03 'Equality and Diversity Policy'

refer to clinically recognised patterns or symptoms of behaviour that can be diagnosed as mental illnesses.

- Whilst these terms and others such as 'mental health problem', 'mental distress' and 'mental ill-health' may help to clarify aspects of the student mental health agenda, mental health is best understood as a continuum along which any person may move. The University recognises that diagnostic labels may not indicate the severity of illness or emotional difficulty and that each case is unique.
- Mental ill-health can affect anyone of any age, gender, ethnicity or social group. Whilst one in four people will experience some kind of mental health problem during the course of a year, mental health is still commonly stigmatised and misunderstood (ref mind.org.uk.)

3 Policy

3.1 The University will take positive steps to:

- a provide a range of support and adjustments for students who experience mental health problems which impact on their University life;
- b offer support to all concerned when working with students with more complex mental illness impacting directly on their University life;
- c create an inclusive environment by promoting mental wellbeing, positive attitudes and enhanced understanding of mental health issues;
- d keep under review services and support for students with mental health conditions, including links to external services.

(Note for guidance:

- The University recognises that some students will experience some type of mental health problem during the course of their studies. In all cases, the University is committed to supporting students who experience such problems and creating an environment in which positive attitudes towards mental health and wellbeing are promoted.
- In many cases, problems will be self-managed by the student concerned and remain unknown to the University. However, some will become more complex and will have a direct impact on the student's experience of University life.
- Mental health problems can impact on all areas of University life. The experience of the individual can be influenced by many factors including personal lifestyles, the perceived attitudes of others and the availability of support. The mental ill-health itself may, at times, have a significant effect on how a student perceives, experiences and deals with situations.
- Many students with mental health problems are supported successfully in managing their mental health needs with the aim of completing their studies.

However, for a number of students, a mental illness has such a detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing, that this needs to be prioritised over their studies. Such situations can be difficult, in particular when the mental illness requires specialist mental health support and the student is unaware or unaccepting of the severity of *their* condition. The University recognises that complex situations like these can impact not only the students themselves but also on the people around them including their fellow students and University staff.)

- 3.2 The University seeks to promote mental wellbeing and positive attitudes towards mental health through its health promotion activities and work with the Students' Union and other agencies.
- 3.3 Through raised awareness and positive promotion of mental health, the University will seek to encourage applicants and students to disclose any mental health conditions, including those recognised as a disability, so that adjustments and support can be agreed for their University life.
- 3.4 In dealing with students with mental health problems, the University will take steps to ensure that, based on their own individual circumstances, students are always listened to, treated with dignity and respect and supported.
- 3.5 The University will make reasonable adjustments and meet its commitments under the provisions of the Equality and Diversity Policy (UPR EQ03⁵), the Data Protection Policy (UPR IM08³) and other relevant legislation.

(Note for guidance:

Some mental health conditions will be recognised as a disability under the Equality Act (2010). However, many people with mental health conditions will not identify themselves as being 'disabled' and some will not fall within the scope of the legal definition of disability. All are included in the context of this policy and will be supported in accessing services within the University.)

- 3.6 The disclosure of a mental health problem will be treated as a confidential matter unless there is reason to believe that a student's mental health would place the disclosing student or another person at serious risk, in which case information will be shared, without the consent of the disclosing student, on a 'need to know' basis.

4 Students presenting with complex mental illness

- 4.1 When a student presents as having a complex mental illness, *they* will be supported in accessing the most appropriate services both within the University and, where appropriate, from external mental health teams and services.
- 4.2 Where a student's mental illness is having a detrimental impact on *their* student life, the Office of the Dean of Students and its Student Wellbeing teams will take pro-

³ UPR IM08 'Data Protection and Privacy Statement'

active steps to identify the most appropriate course of action in line with the Support to Study policy (see UPR EQ11).

5 Implementation

5.1 The University:

- i provides a range of mental health support through the Office of the Dean of Students, its Student Wellbeing teams (Counselling, Disability and Mental Health), the University Medical Practice, the Students' Union Advice and Support Centre and the Student Occupational Health; support is also widespread in Schools, Housing and other professional departments;
- ii maintains close links with external mental health teams and seeks to work closely with them, in particular during times of crisis;
- iii provides regular support for people with mild, moderate and severe mental health conditions.

5.2 The Office of the Dean of Students will review the services available to support students with mental health problems and take steps to ensure that Schools and professional departments work effectively together to provide a cohesive approach.

5.3 This document will be reviewed bi-annually by the Dean of Students.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **1 August 2020**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.