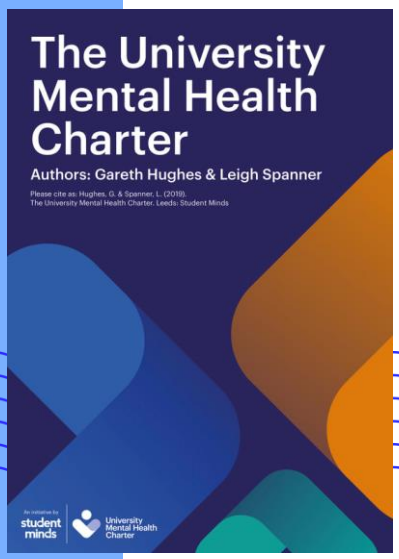
The University Mental Health Charter

What's in it and why is it important?



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A new charter

- Announced May 2018
- Evidence-informed Charter - reference point for universities to adopt a "whole-university approach" to mental health, and inform ongoing enquiry and debate
- Maps against UUK StepChange and UUK "Mentally Health Universities" due early 2020
- Charter Award Scheme, which will assess universities against the Charter and recognise providers who demonstrate excellent practice (piloted early next year, opens September 2020)
- Voluntary – but who would say no (notwithstanding assessment/award format and cost of participation)
- Has support of DfE, OfS, all the big players

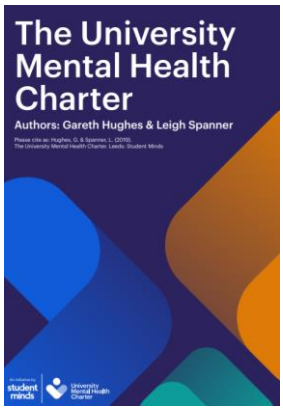
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What's in the charter?

- 18 themes, mapped against the 4 domains and enabling themes of the UUK Mentally Healthy Universities model.
- Classic quality model. See QSA, Quality Code, ATHENA Swan etc
- Within each of the themes, the charter document sets out what the theme covers, evidence supporting why it is important and what matters within this theme, and principles of good practice.
- The principles really matter. They will form the basis of the Charter Award Scheme and universities that apply to the Award Scheme will be asked to demonstrate their progress towards the principles to achieve the Award.
- Principles ("standards") are designed not to be prescriptive.
- Award scheme will ask universities to demonstrate how they are addressing the principles of good practice "within their own context".

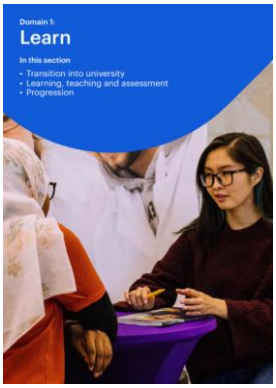


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Learn: Transition into university

- Universities take a whole university approach to transition, embedding measures to support the positive transition of all students across their provision and into the curriculum.
- Measures to support transition begin from pre-application and continue through application, pre-entry, arrival, induction and through the first year.
- Measures to support transition aim to promote wellbeing, efficacy, academic integration and social connectedness.
- Universities provide additional or specific interventions for students who face additional barriers.

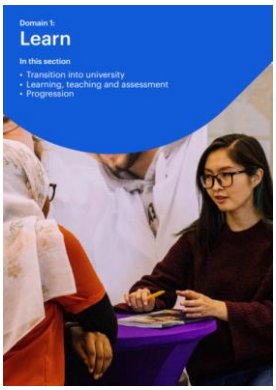


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Learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

- Universities ensure that curriculum takes a holistic and inclusive view of learners, using evidence informed practice and secure scaffolding to enable all students to develop skills, confidence, academic self-efficacy and improve performance.
- Universities ensure that curriculum is designed to facilitate students to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at an appropriate pace.
- Universities ensure that curriculum and pedagogic practice encourages deep learning, meaning, mastery and development.
- Universities ensure that curriculum design, pedagogic practice and academic processes consider and seek to impact positively on the mental health and wellbeing of all students.
- Universities clarify the role of academics in supporting student mental health and guide staff to maintain supportive, appropriate boundaries.
- Universities ensure that staff in teaching and learning support roles understand how they can support student mental health and wellbeing through good pedagogic practice.

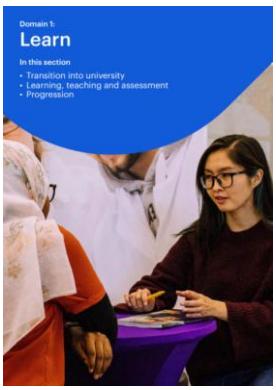


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Learn: Progression

- Universities support students to prepare for the multiple, ongoing transitions they encounter during their university career, e.g. between years\ levels of study.
- Universities provide targeted support for students on placement and on professional programmes, who may require more in-depth preparation and specific interventions.
- Universities provide adequate support for students taking breaks in study and proactively support their transition back into education.
- Universities support students to prepare for life, career and further study beyond graduation.
- Universities ensure that support for these transitions is structurally embedded into curriculum and university practice.



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Support: Support Services

- Universities ensure that support services are appropriately resourced.
- Universities ensure that support services are safe.
- Universities ensure that support services are effective.
- Universities ensure that support services are responsive to current and future need and to local context.
- Universities ensure that support services are equally accessible to all students.
- Universities ensure that support services are well governed.



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Support: Risk

- Universities have in place effective practice, processes and training for alerting and assessing risk to staff and students, and appropriately referring those at risk to internal or external services.
- Universities ensure staff have access to timely, expert advice and guidance.
- Universities provide interventions for all affected by risk and suicide and provide support for those at risk, when waiting for external interventions.
- Universities plan for prevention, intervention and post-vention activities, including planning for suicide clusters and reporting to the media.
- Universities reduce risk by ensuring they provide a safe physical environment and university culture.
- Universities support students to be able to report concerns.



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Support: External partnerships and pathways

- Universities take proactive steps to build relationships with local NHS, Social Care and third sector agencies, creating a shared understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and demonstrating a commitment to principles of effective collaboration.
- Universities are able and willing to work collaboratively with NHS/Social Care to support individual students.
- Universities support NHS/Social Care and other relevant agencies to understand the context of student life and the implications of treatment options and other decisions.
- Universities have arrangements in place to assess risk and effectively communicate this to NHS/Social Care.
- Universities work with NHS/Social Care to support students to return to study when appropriate.
- Universities work collaboratively with DSA funded private providers, ensuring they are aware of providers who provide support to their students and that those providers understand the mechanisms for reporting concerns.



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Support: Information sharing

- University services work with students to mobilise all of their available resources to support their mental health– especially in instances of crisis.
- The university acknowledges and demonstrates understanding that working with families, statutory services and others can provide effective support for students with poor mental health.
- Student autonomy is central to decision making in relation to sharing information and is enabled as far as possible, unless the individual is appropriately assessed to lack mental capacity.
- Universities ensure that any decision to override student wishes or to pass on information without consent is done as a result of an appropriate, well governed, clinical assessment, is consistent with relevant national guidance, is clearly justifiable and is in the best interests of the student.
- Universities ensure that information is passed to the most appropriate people, who can reduce risk.
- Confidentiality arrangements are clear, accessible and highly visible and relevant Data Sharing Agreements are in place.



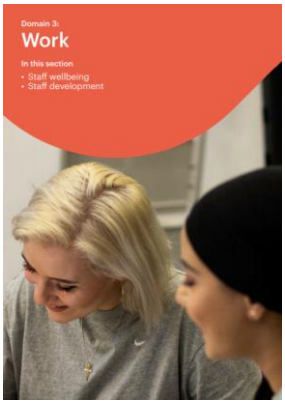
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Work: Staff Wellbeing

- Universities develop a culture and environment that supports good staff wellbeing and good workplace conditions.
- Universities ensure staff feel able to discuss their own mental health and wellbeing and have access to effective, accessible support and proactive interventions to help them improve their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Universities ensure staff feel psychologically safe to enable them to innovate, identify improvements and raise concerns about culture and practice that may impact on mental health.
- Universities equip managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support good wellbeing within their teams and respond appropriately when staff experience poor mental health.
- Universities enable staff to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle and workplace behaviours.
- Universities support staff to spend a significant proportion of their time on work that is meaningful to them and appropriate to their role.

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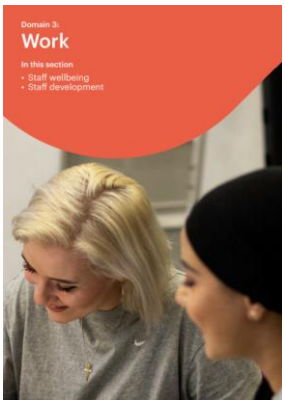


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Work: Staff development

- Universities support staff to develop, individually and collectively, the confidence and ability to promote positive mental health and respond appropriately to poor mental health.
- Universities support staff to recognise and respond appropriately to poor mental health and signs of risk, signpost effectively and maintain the safe boundaries of their role.
- Staff receive mental health training that is context and role specific.
- Universities promote a workplace environment and management practices that support formal and informal reflection, consultation and development for staff who may encounter student mental illness.
- Universities provide formal development for managers that enables them to promote good wellbeing within teams, understand the challenges staff may face, provide appropriate support for their teams and have knowledge of resources that can help.
- Universities ensure staff in mental health roles engage in regular, ongoing clinical development.

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Live: Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment

- Universities promote the mental health of all members of the community through education, actively encouraging healthy behaviours and community building and providing proactive interventions to improve wellbeing.
- Universities take steps to create an environment and culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Universities take steps to create an environment that facilitates and makes it easy for individuals and groups to adopt healthy behaviours, offering multiple and varied options and interventions.
- Universities take steps to create a culture that prioritises mental health as important and are open and highly visible in doing so.
- Universities take steps to create a culture in which individuals feel safe and supported to disclose when they are experiencing poor mental health.



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Live: Residential accommodation

- Student accommodation provides safe, environments that are positive for mental health and wellbeing.
- Student accommodation supports every student students to meet their physical and psychological needs and manage their wellbeing.
- Student accommodation is inclusive and supports all students to find their friendship group and build a sense of belonging.
- Arrangements are in place to recognise poor mental health and to refer students to appropriate support. This includes supporting accommodation providers and support services to collaborate and develop a shared understanding of provision, data sharing and signposting arrangements.
- Accommodation staff are trained and supported in responding to student mental illness.
- Universities provide support for students living with a peer who is experiencing significant mental illness and staff in accommodation who may be responding to student mental illness.



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Live: Social integration and belonging

- Universities take considered action to ensure a diverse, safe community.
- Universities actively and systematically support the social integration of all students.
- Universities take action to tackle the causes and effects of social isolation.
- Universities provide support for those experiencing loneliness.
- Universities work to prevent and address marginalisation, discrimination or harassment of individual students and groups.
- Universities ensure social cohesion and individual differences exist alongside each other, taking account of power dynamics and imbalances.



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Live: Physical environment

- Universities engage with evidence and their communities to embed wellbeing and accessibility within the design of new buildings and developments.
- Universities engage with evidence and their communities to embed wellbeing and accessibility into the redevelopment and maintenance of current estate.
- Universities ensure that the design and allocation of working and learning spaces effectively supports the learning/work undertaken within that space.
- Universities facilitate and actively encourage staff and students to engage with nature.
- Universities ensure staff and students have access to appropriate social space.
- Universities ensure that wayfinding is clear and makes navigating campus easy for all.



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Enabling Themes: Leadership, strategy and policy

- Universities have a strategic whole university approach to mental health that is embedded in day to day practice and culture.
- Universities have an approach to mental health and wellbeing that is robustly evidence informed.
- Universities have an approach to mental health and wellbeing that is co-produced with staff and students, seeks to mobilise the whole community and considers mental health across the whole-university.
- Universities approach to mental health and wellbeing is evident in other strategies, policies, procedures and practice.
- There is visible leadership and commitment to mental health across the entire organisation.
- Universities approach to mental health is clearly linked to and part of core institutional missions.



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Enabling Themes: Student voice and participation

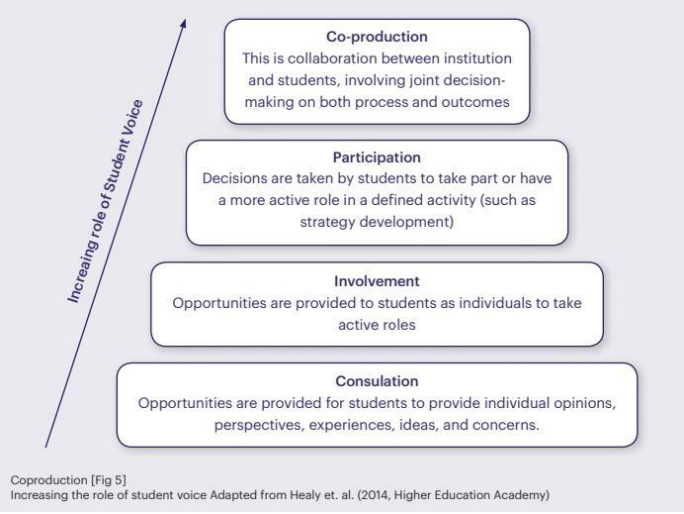
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Enabling Themes: Student voice and participation



Coproduction [Fig 5]
Increasing the role of student voice Adapted from Healy et. al. (2014, Higher Education Academy)

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Enabling Themes: Cohesiveness of Support across the Provider

- Universities ensure cohesion and appropriate collaboration between different support services.
- Universities ensure cohesion and appropriate collaboration between support services and academic teams.
- Universities facilitate appropriate sharing of information across the institution to support individual students.
- Universities ensure effective signposting and triage across the institution.
- Universities work to develop a shared vision and understanding between different parts of the university community, towards mental health.

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Enabling Themes: Inclusivity and Intersectional mental health

- Universities take action to understand their populations and staff and students' differing needs and experiences.
- Universities ensure that the culture and environment is inclusive, welcoming and safe for all members of the university community.
- Universities develop specific interventions that address the barriers to mental health and wellbeing faced by particular groups due to structural, personal or cultural inequalities.
- Universities develop specific interventions that address the barriers to mental health and wellbeing faced by particular groups due to higher education specific inequalities, such as mode of study or access.
- Universities ensure support services work to improve their cultural competence and are able to respond to different student backgrounds, characteristics and experiences.

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Enabling Themes: Research, innovation and dissemination

- Universities support research into university mental health and wellbeing and the development of innovative good practice.
- Universities encourage collaboration and dissemination of learning between research and practice, between disciplines and between universities and relevant organisations.
- Universities undertake rigorous and systematic evaluation of services and interventions that informs decision making and continuous improvement.
- Universities enable support services staff to participate in, lead and disseminate research.

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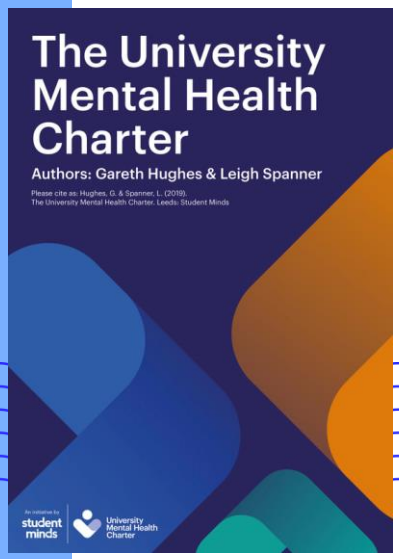
And finally

- Measuring the baseline?
- Extenuating circumstances
- Fit to sit
- Partner institutions and placement providers
- SUs as delivery partners



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