Student Mental Health and Student Minds

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Student Mental Health and Student Minds

Student minds

- Student Minds works with students, service users, professionals and academics to develop new and innovative ways to improve the mental health of students.

- Empower students and members of the university community to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to look after their own mental health, support others, and create change, so that all in higher education can thrive.
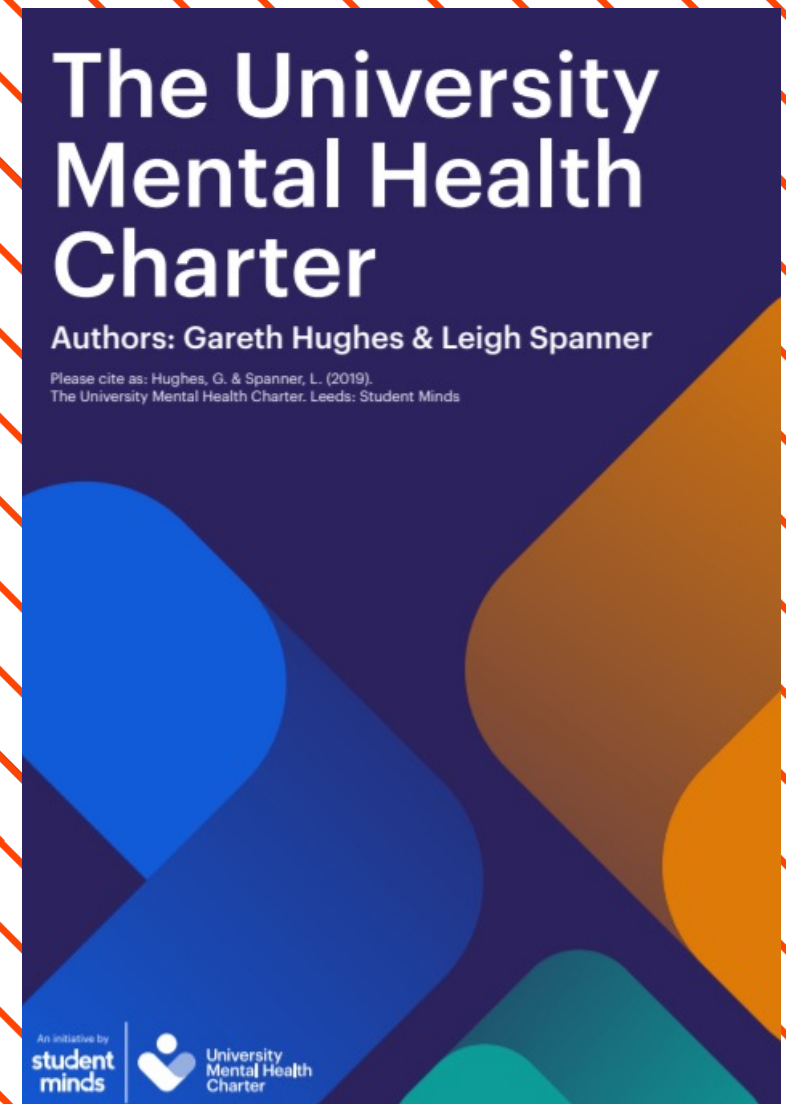
A charter . . .

- 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

Universities UK

SMaRteN

upp Foundation

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Office for Students · OfS

AMOSSHE
The Student Services Organisation
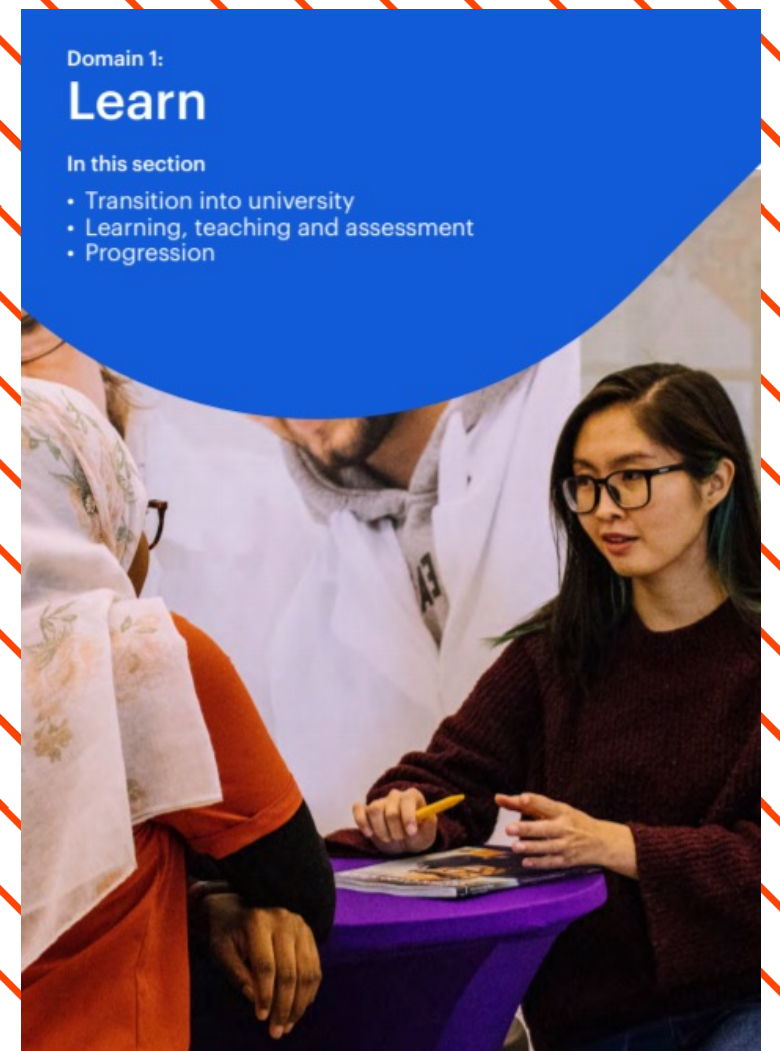
nus
national union of students

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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The University
Mental Health
Charter

Authors: Gareth Hughes & Leigh Spanner

Please cite as: Hughes, G. & Spanner, L. (2019).
The University Mental Health Charter. Leeds: Student Minds

student minds | University Mental Health Charter
An initiative by

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.

Domain 1:
Learn

In this section
- Transition into university
- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Progression

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Learn: Learning, teaching and assessment
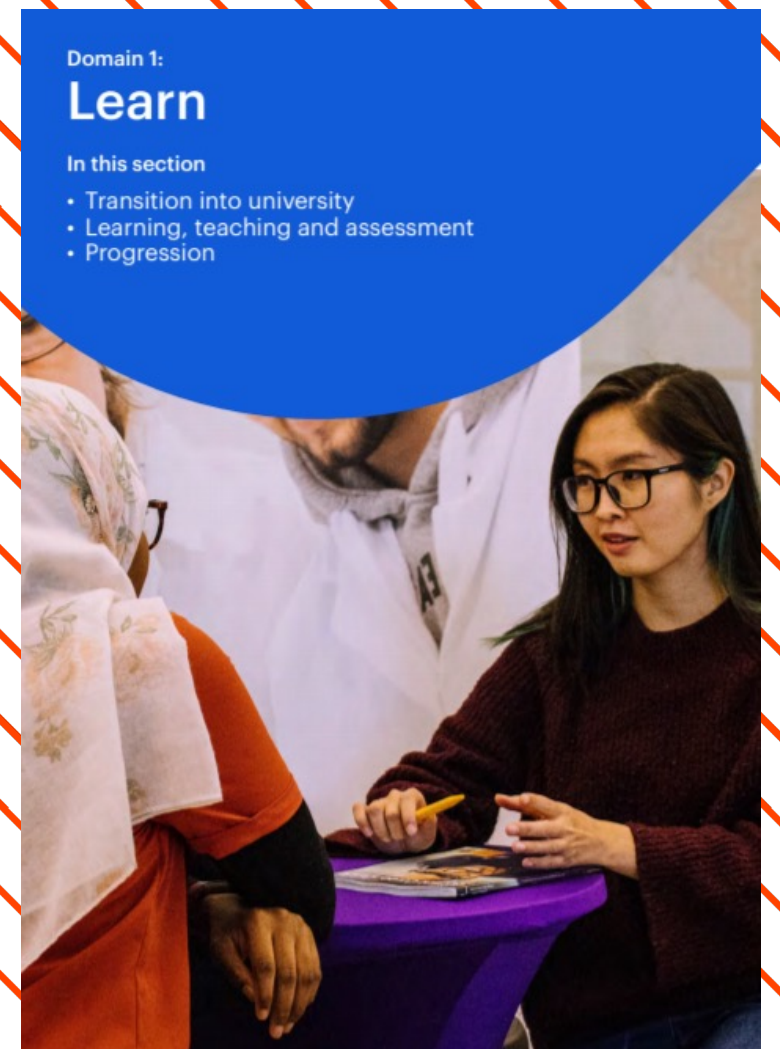

Domain 1:

Learn

In this section
- Transition into university
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- Progression

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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.

Domain 1:
Learn

In this section
- Transition into university
- Learning, teaching and assessment
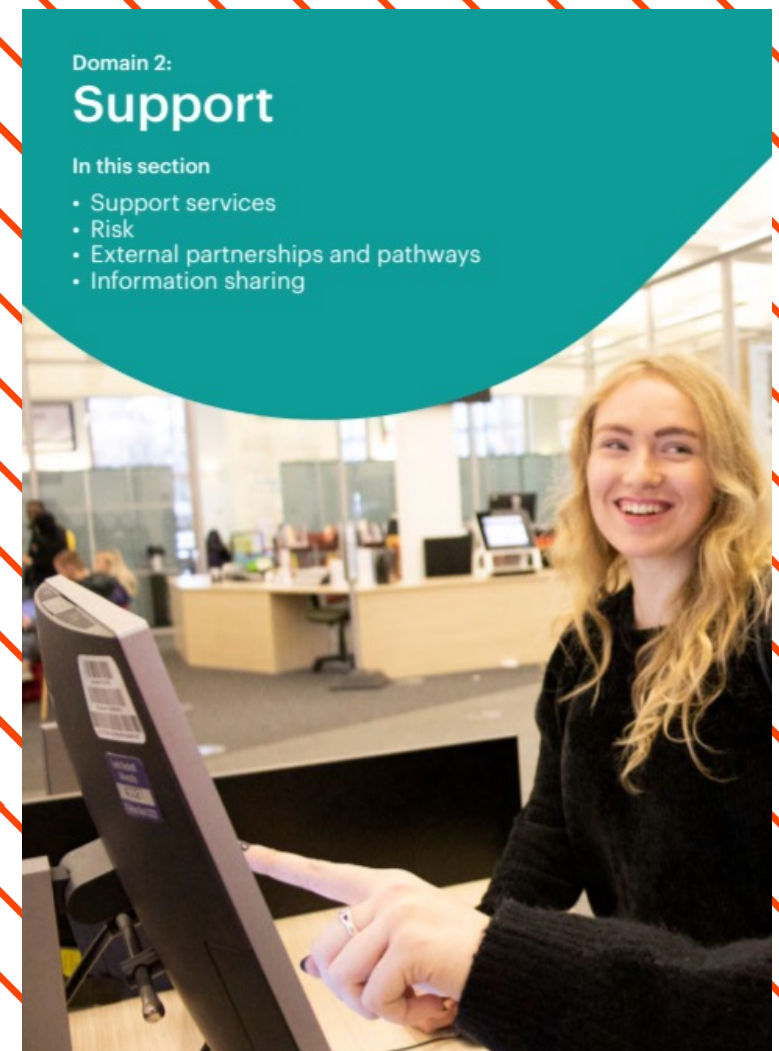- Progression

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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.
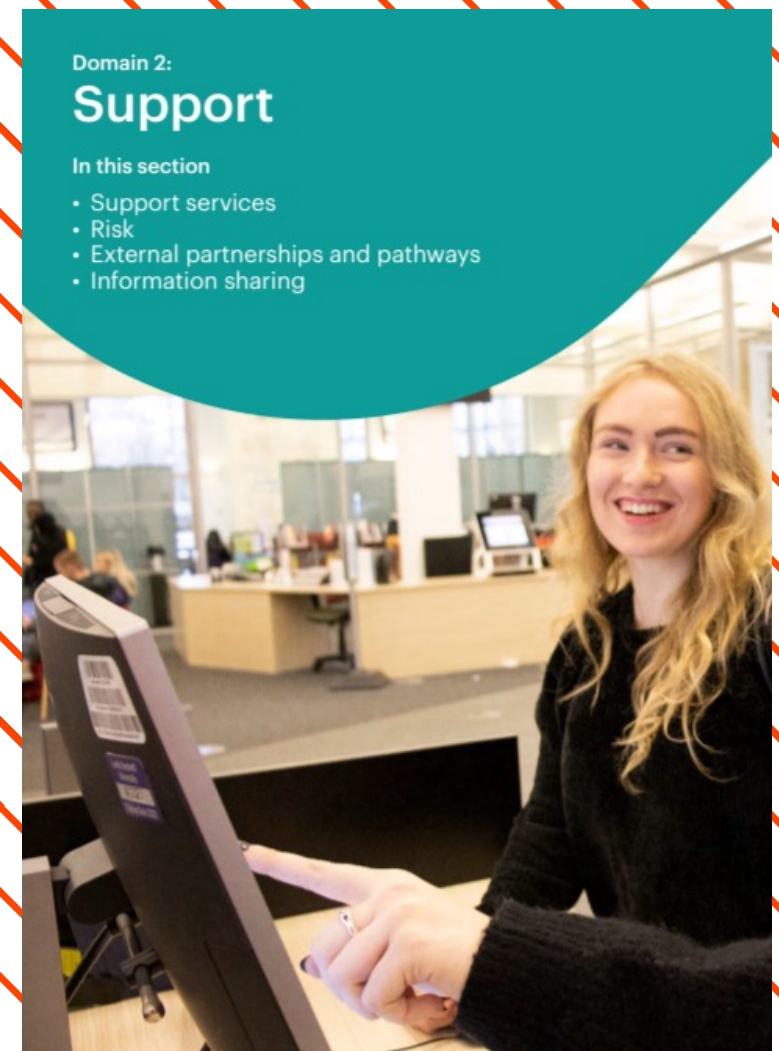

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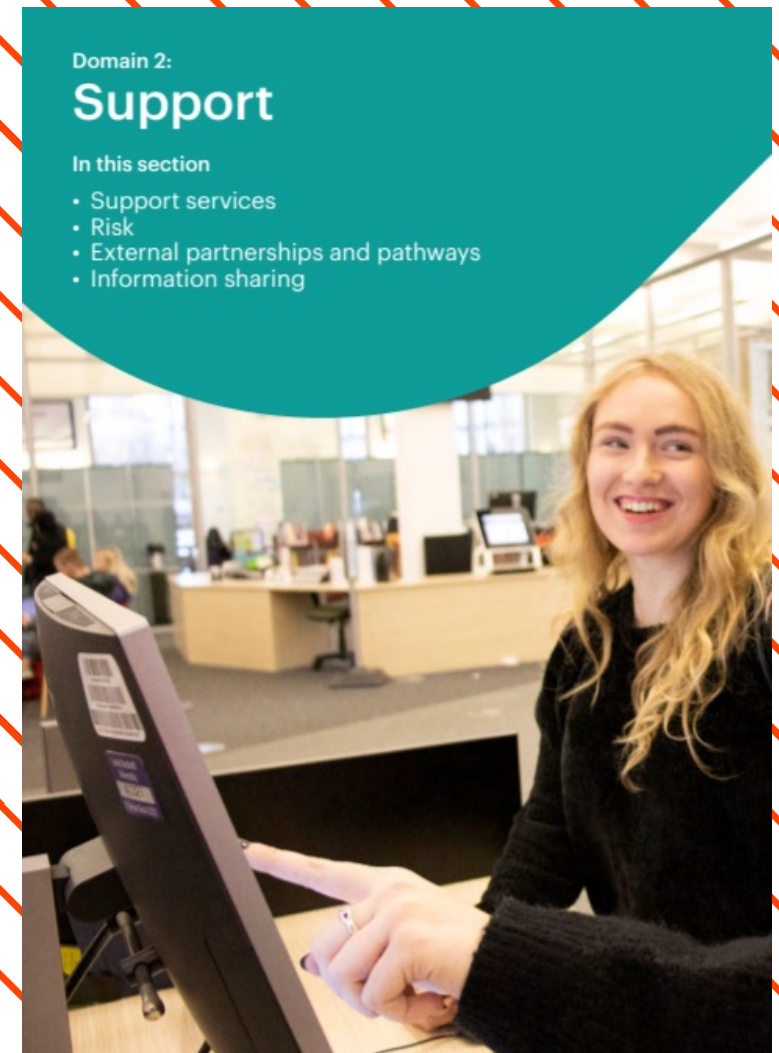
Support: Risk

- 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.

Domain 2:
Support

In this section
- Support services
- Risk
- External partnerships and pathways
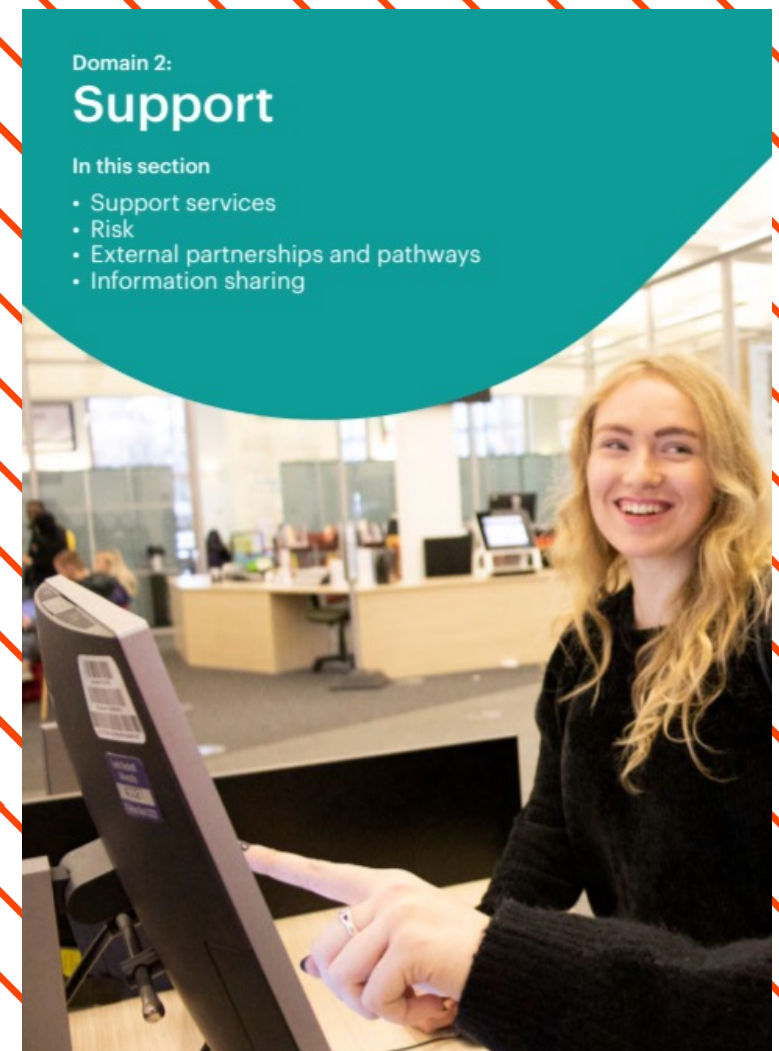- Information sharing

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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.

Domain 2:
Support

In this section
- Support services
- Risk
- External partnerships and pathways
- Information sharing

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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.

Domain 2:
Support

In this section
- Support services
- Risk
- External partnerships and pathways
- Information sharing

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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.

Domain 3:
Work

In this section
- Staff wellbeing
- Staff development

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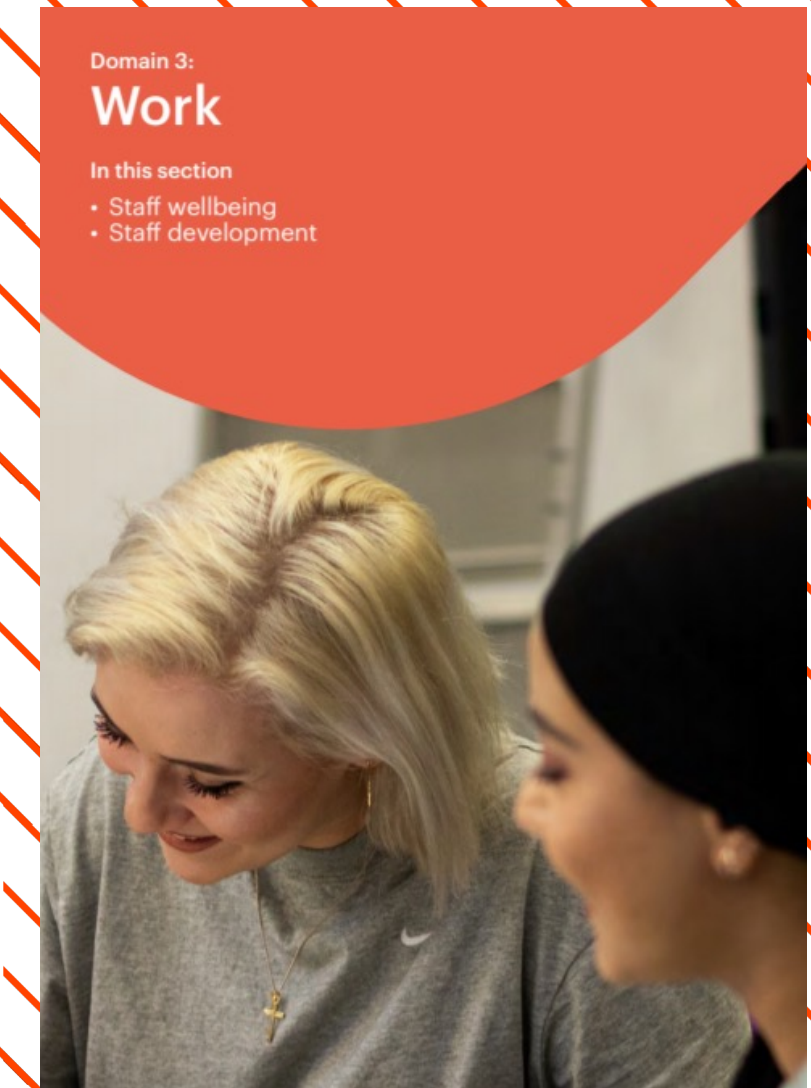
Work: Staff development

- 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.

Domain 3:
Work

In this section
- Staff wellbeing
- Staff 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.

Domain 4:
Live

In this section
- Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment
- Residential accommodation
- Social integration and belonging
- Physical environment

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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.

Domain 4:
Live

In this section
- Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment
- Residential accommodation
- Social integration and belonging
- Physical environment

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.

Domain 4:
Live

In this section
- Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment
- Residential accommodation
- Social integration and belonging
- Physical environment

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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.

Domain 4:
Live

In this section
- Proactive interventions and a mentally healthy environment
- Residential accommodation
- Social integration and belonging
- Physical environment

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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.

Enabling Themes

In this section
- Leadership, strategy and policy
- Student voice and participation
- Cohesiveness of support across the provider
- Inclusivity and intersectional mental health
- Research, innovation and dissemination

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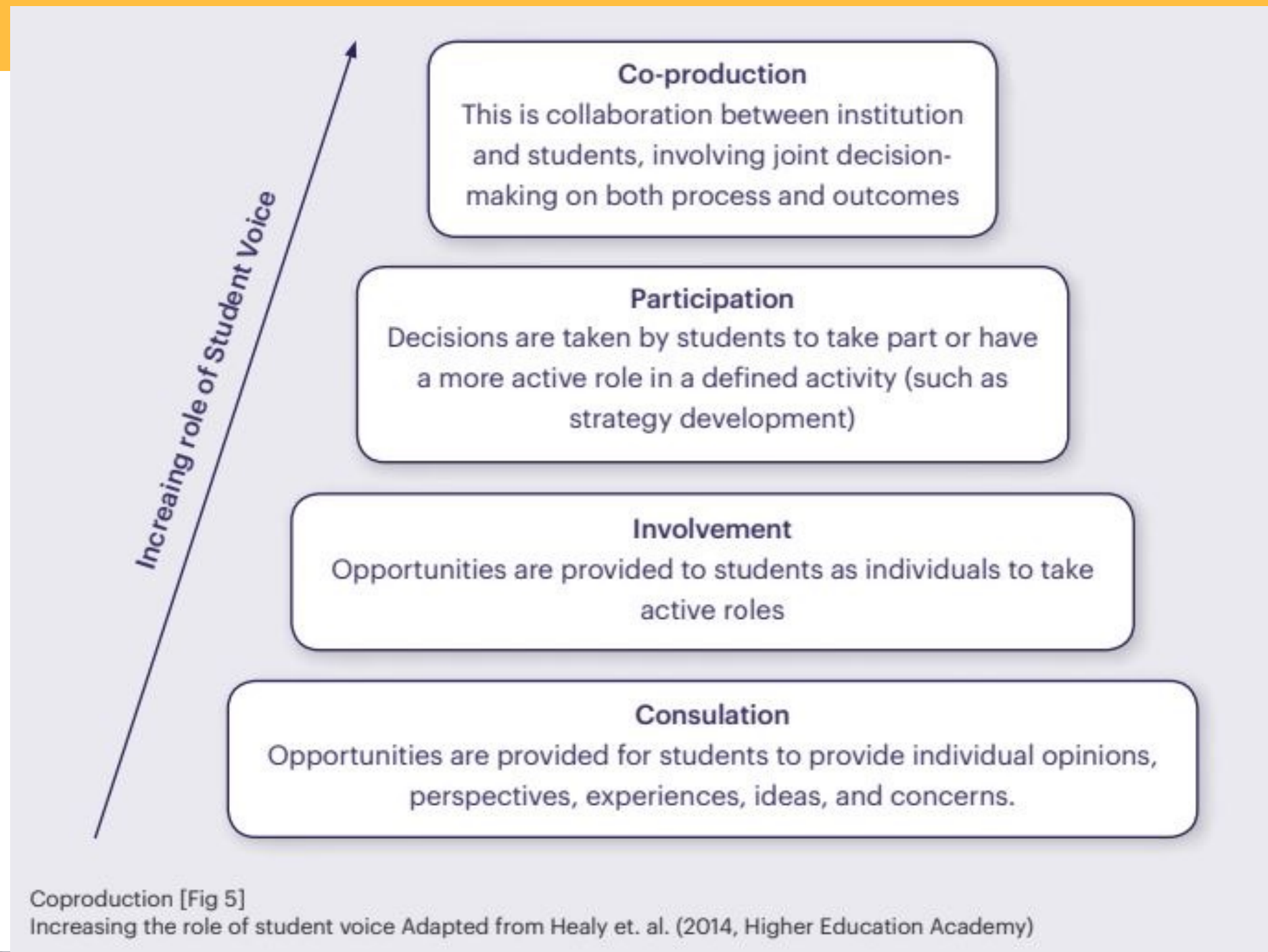

Enabling Themes

In this section
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- Research, innovation and dissemination

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Enabling Themes: Student voice and participation

Co-production
This is collaboration between institution and students, involving joint decision-making on both process and outcomes

Participation
Decisions are taken by students to take part or have a more active role in a defined activity (such as strategy development)

Involvement
Opportunities are provided to students as individuals to take active roles

Consulation
Opportunities are provided for students to provide individual opinions, perspectives, experiences, ideas, and concerns.

Increaing role of Student Voice

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

Enabling Themes

In this section
• Leadership, strategy and policy
• Student voice and participation
• Cohesiveness of support across the provider
• Inclusivity and intersectional mental health
• Research, innovation and dissemination

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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.

Enabling Themes

In this section
- Leadership, strategy and policy
- Student voice and participation
- Cohesiveness of support across the provider
- Inclusivity and intersectional mental health
- Research, innovation and dissemination

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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.
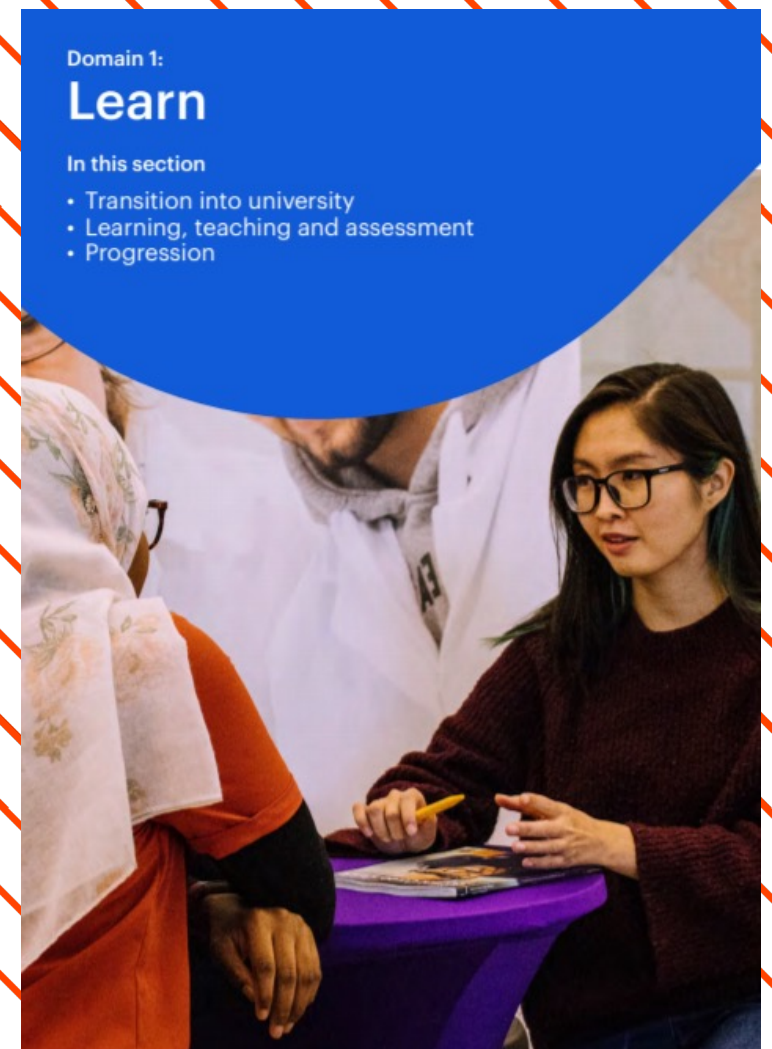

Enabling Themes

In this section
- Leadership, strategy and policy
- Student voice and participation
- Cohesiveness of support across the provider
- Inclusivity and intersectional mental health
- Research, innovation and dissemination

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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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Enabling Themes

In this section
- Leadership, strategy and policy
- Student voice and participation
- Cohesiveness of support across the provider
- Inclusivity and intersectional mental health
- Research, innovation and dissemination

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.

Domain 1:
Learn

In this section
- Transition into university
- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Progression

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Why T&L?

- There is a link between student mental health and wellbeing and student learning, persistence, creativity, problem solving, satisfaction and achievement.

- Students who experience poor mental health are more likely to withdraw, underperform and be dissatisfied with their learning and experience.

- Positive wellbeing has been associated with better and deeper learning, higher levels of creativity and problem solving, higher achievement and better levels of student satisfaction.

- How students are taught and assessed, and how they engage with learning, can have an impact on their wellbeing.

- There are then practical, financial and moral reasons to ensure that the curriculum is supporting good wellbeing and learning.

COURSE REPS

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How much anxiety is OK?

- What should students be able to "push through", and what should be treated with concern?

- How should we respond to increased levels of anxiety?

- And when it comes to stress and anxiety, what are the dividing lines between helpful, tolerable, intolerable and harmful?

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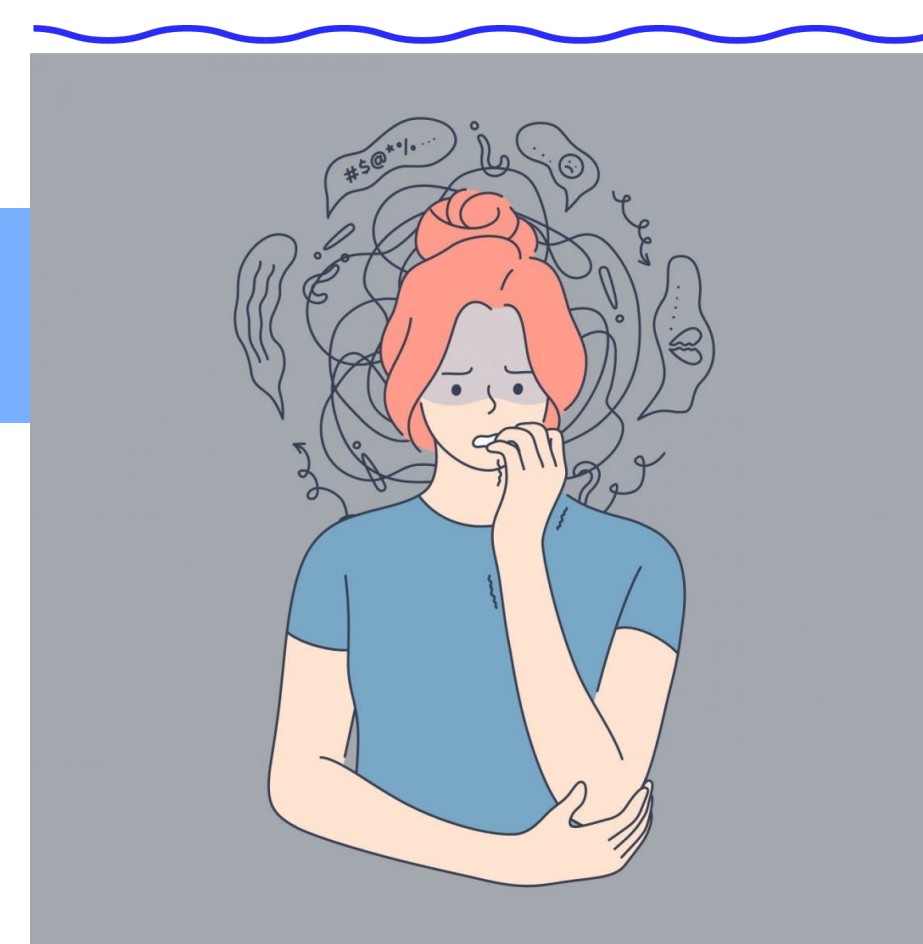
What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a fear response to a perceived threat. Students become anxious about education when they view it or the environment as a threat to them.

- That may be stimulated by social and cultural experiences, which, for instance, leave students feeling marginalised, ostracised or humiliated.

- Alternatively, it may arise from a fear of failure or the perceived consequences of failure.
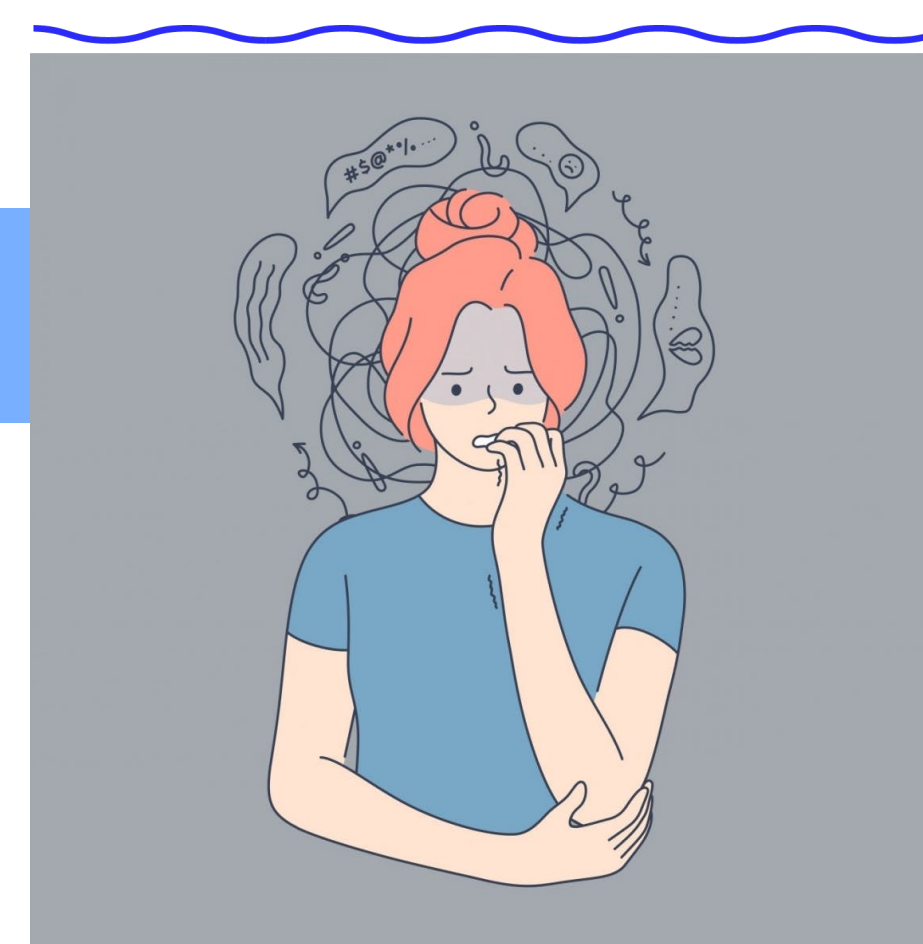
Pedagogy – three ideas

- **Stretch** is being challenged in ways that can be positive for learning, wellbeing and achievement. It has been shown to be helpful in motivating someone to engage in helpful behaviours (such as studying and academic performance). Being challenged pushes us to grow and develop. Meeting and overcoming challenges by mastering new skills and knowledge has powerful, positive payoffs for wellbeing.

- **Boredom** can have a negative effect on wellbeing. A lack of challenge in our lives can lead to low motivation and a lack of meaning and purpose. Students in a co-creation group that worked on the toolkit reported that when they found modules boring, they became disengaged, lost motivation and began to doubt their future, which in turn reduced their mood.

- **High levels of stress and anxiety** can reduce cognitive functioning at a neurological level. This reduces students' ability to engage in complex thinking, to access old memories or make new, complex memories, to problem solve and to maintain concentration. In other words, anxiety reduces the capacity for learning and academic performance at a biological level.
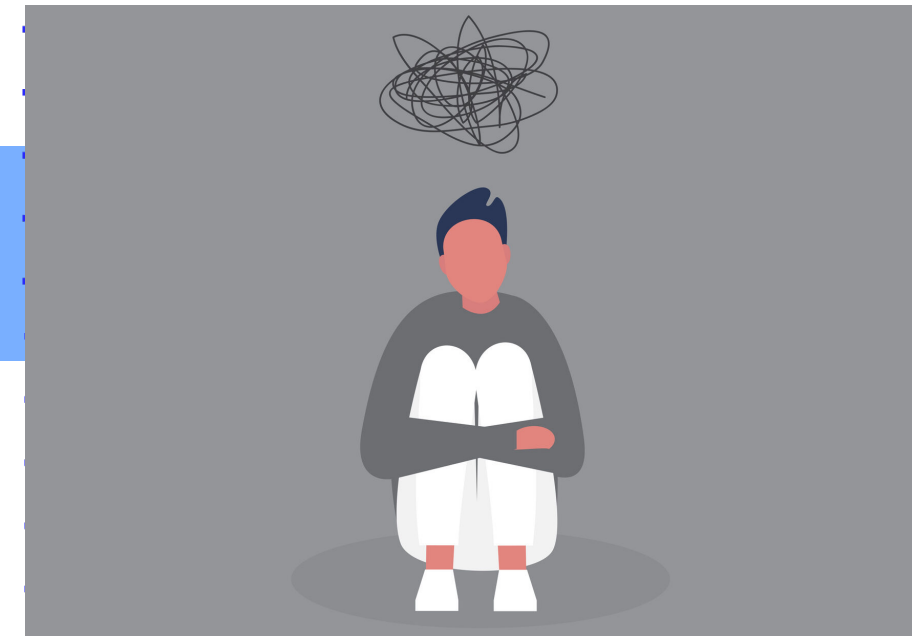
Questions to ask

- Was I appropriately prepared and did I understand what I had to do and how to do it?

- Did I recognise my own skills and resources?

- Did I have the necessary skills to undertake the task or was I able to develop them as a result of completing the task?

- Did I have the necessary and appropriate support from staff?

- Did I have the necessary and appropriate support from other students?

- Did I have the resources I needed – including time?

- Did I feel intrinsically motivated and focussed on the aspects of the task that were meaningful to me?

- Was I in an environment that felt psychologically safe?

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Standards and scores

- If students need to know, understand or be able to do something, it must be taught to them first.

- If students have previous experience of a task and know how to tackle it, they will be less anxious.

- Normalising mistakes in the classroom (online or face to face) can create a learning environment that lowers anxiety and increases learning.

- Classroom activities that identify students' current level of knowledge and understanding mean that teaching and learning activities can be calibrated to the group.

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Curriculum

- Changes to the structure of the curriculum, to curriculum content, to modes and methods of assessment, to grading and to the social environment within the classroom (online and in person) and in group learning activities, have the potential to improve both student wellbeing and learning.

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How to get it wrong

- curricula can undermine students' sense of autonomy if it is **overly prescriptive** or if students **do not have clarity** on why they are being asked to engage in particular learning and assessment tasks.

- curricula can undermine students' sense of competence and achievement if it is not **appropriately stretching,** if **feedback** is overly **critical or absent,** if students are not supported to **develop their ability to self-reflect** on their own growth.

- curricula can undermine autonomous motivation if learning is **confused,** improperly **sequenced,** lacks **personal meaning** and **assumes the existence of pre-knowledge** which students do not have.

How to get it wrong

- deadline bunching results in students having to complete significant amounts of work at the same time, potentially competing with other responsibilities leading to exhaustion and the adoption of surface leaning strategies.

- the learning environment feels hostile or potentially threatening – e.g., if it lacks psychological safety or peers are characterised as the competition rather than collaborative learners.

- the learning environment encourages students to adopt unhealthy study behaviours – going without sleep, working long hours without breaks, etc.

Matched summative assessment · Ethos · The nature of the subject · Meeting the needs of our students · Highly effective curriculum planning · Sequencing · Independence · Quality teacher explanations · Reading · Spaced interleaving · Activities for practice

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Standards and scores

- Learning provides meaning, purpose and a sense of fulfilment

- The learning environment is inclusive, supportive, health promoting and psychologically safe

- The curriculum supports sustainable personal growth in knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence

- The curriculum engages student voice and teaching, learning and assessment are modified in response to student learning, experience and insight


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Assessment

- Risk point which can create unhelpful stress, anxiety, self-doubt and fatigue.

- This is particularly the case when students and assessment design have a performance focus – when reaching a specific set of predetermined standards is the reason assessment exists and is the centre of student focus.

- This is what is meant by "high stakes" assessment – there is a significant price to pay for failure – and students will be focussed mainly or solely on what they need to do to succeed.

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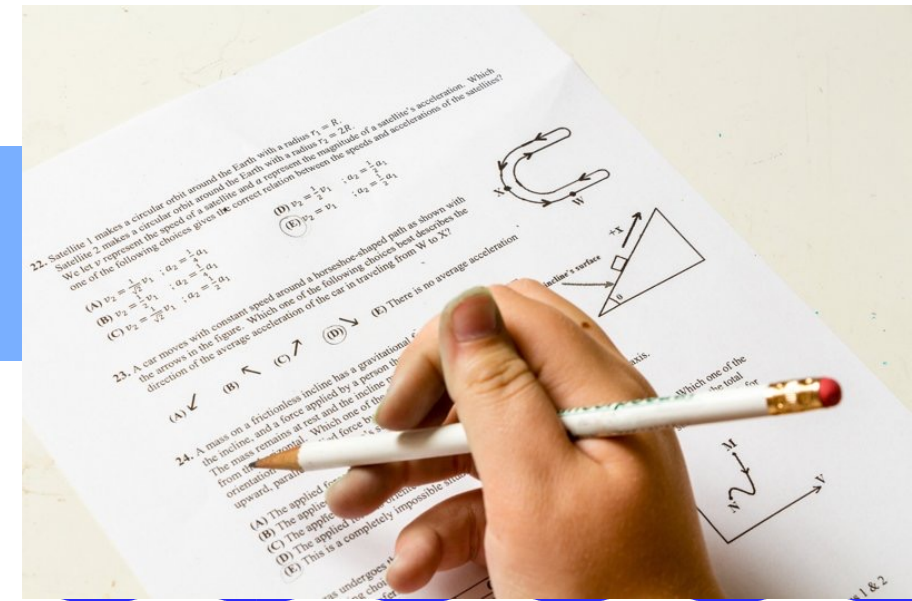
Good for wellbeing

While assessment is often associated with risks to wellbeing, if well designed it can support learning and wellbeing.

- Assessment for learning places a priority on promoting student **learning,** rather than on measuring ability to **meet predetermined criteria**.

- **Assessment for learning** is seen as a component part of teaching and learning. Learning can be supported through the **design** of the task, through **feedback** and through accompanying exercises.

- An assessment for learning strategy can support a **performance focussed culture that is beneficial** for learning and wellbeing.

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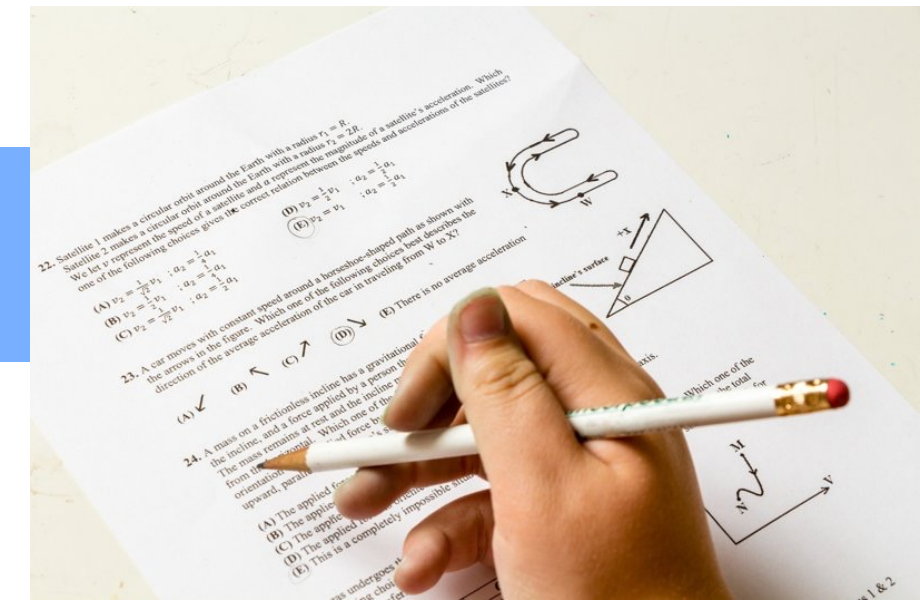
Standards and scores

- Was it clear what knowledge, understanding and skills I was developing when assessment was set?

- Were assessment briefs used to highlight the learning and development students expected by completing the task?

- Were there accompanying meta-cognitive tasks, like requiring students to reflect on their own work or provide responses to feedback detailing how they will apply it in future learning?

- Was feedback used to highlight the learning and development students gained from completing the task?

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Psycho-safety

- In a psychologically safe learning environment, students feel safe to make mistakes, take risks to further their learning and thinking and ask for help and support when needed.

- Psychological safety makes it more likely that students will engage in classroom activities and debates - this supports learning and helps develop a sense of community and belonging.

- An unsafe environment can raise anxiety and lead to class avoidance and/or disengagement.

- Psychological safety must be planned for and time must be devoted to establishing and maintaining a healthy classroom culture.

- Students will need to witness a safe environment being maintained consistently before they will trust it.

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Standards and scores

- Induction/orientation and/or the first class of term to focus on creating cohort identity, a safe social environment and social rules.

- Positive feedback to students who contribute early, encourage debate and be willing to show own learning.

- Discuss of mistakes to show that they are a normal part of the learning process.

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Community, identity, status

- Research has shown that social connection is a basic human need, necessary for wellbeing and health

- Social environments can have profound effects on wellbeing and cognitive functioning, with 'toxic' environments having the potential to reduce an individual's capacity for thought, decision making and good health

- Social and cultural environment of the classroom has a key role in learning and wellbeing (whether the classroom is virtual or in person).

Factors

Shared identity, Social rules, Inclusivity

- Classroom culture (online and in person) is crucial to student learning, persistence and wellbeing

- Students can benefit from a shared social identity, a sense of community and helpful and health social norms and rule – an environment that facilitates peer-learning, collaboration rather than a competitive environment.

- Creating a healthy classroom culture requires explicit attention and should be a feature of curriculum design

- Use induction/orientation and/or the first class of term to focus on creating cohort identity, a safe social environment and social rules

- Use opportunities to identify how a range of prior experiences enriches the learning environment

- Use the academic discipline to co-create a shared sense of community

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In the toolkit

- Deep and Surface Learning, Finding Meaning in Learning, Curriculum Coherence, Sustainable Challenge, Desirable Difficulty, Workload, Assessment for Learning

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Workload

- While hard work can be good for wellbeing, the structure of a student's workload can have negative consequences for wellbeing and the depth of their learning.

- Deadline bunching can cause students to become overwhelmed and to adopt surface level strategies. Bunching can also undermine motivation and self-belief.

- Negative impacts can be greater for students with other commitments who have less flexibility in their time.

- Workload structures need to be planned into curriculum design and across modules to produce sustainable challenge.

Questions:

- What is the structure and spread of student workload across the curriculum?

- Do students understand how to approach assessments, to create greater confidence that they can complete it competently and reduce perceptions that workload is too great?

- Do students have stretching academic activity across the whole of term, to build sustainable challenge?

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There's also...

- Scaffolded Design
- Learner Development
- Getting students back on track

- Key is enabling students to analyse their experience rather than react to it reflexively.
- Also: You can see why understanding of/training on M/H so important for academics. Not (just) about distress in 121s!

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When a student presents in distress

- It is inevitable that students will disclose mental health problems and present in distress to academics.

- Being prepared can help academics respond effectively, within the boundaries of their role.

- Academics are not responsible for providing qualified mental health support – a helpful structured conversation can help students access appropriate support.

- Where there is potential risk, academics must tell an appropriate person by appropriate means. Confidentiality does not prevent this.

- Explain role and boundaries to students when first meet, so they are not surprised when suggest they access support from colleagues in Student Services.

- Be honest about what can and cannot do.

- Give conversation a structure and, as much as possible, let students take responsibility and control of the situation.

- Know who can be contacted if concerned about a student and how contact them.

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