

Student Mental Health Policy

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 The University of Northampton believes that no student should be disadvantaged from succeeding in their studies due to mental health difficulties or conditions. The University is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students who need to access mental health support services at any point during their time at the University.
- 1.2 This policy is designed to provide advice and guidance to:
- Students who experience mental health difficulties or a mental health condition during their studies on what support they can expect to receive from the University.
 - University staff who have a role in supporting and advising students with mental health difficulties.
 - Students who have concerns about the mental health of another student.

2.0 Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 The policy covers any current or prospective student with a mental health difficulty or condition and outlines the University's and individuals' responsibilities in these circumstances. It should be noted that the terms "mental health difficulty" and "mental health condition" applies to students with both longstanding and short-term difficulties with their mental health.
- 2.2 The University is committed to creating an environment which supports good mental health and is committed to supporting students to ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of our campus community. However, it must be highlighted that the expertise of the University is in the provision of higher education. There will be certain situations that will be beyond the scope of our in-house mental health support services to deal with e.g. complexity of needs, high level of risk to self or others. Where this is the case this should be made clear to students and they should be encouraged to seek help from other services that are available to them. This might mean signposting students to engage with their GP or local NHS mental health services.

3.0 Rights and responsibilities

- 3.1 This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff and the University.

Students

- 3.2 Students have a right to attend and study without being subject to prejudice or discrimination as a result of any mental health difficulties or conditions.
- 3.3 All students experiencing any mental health difficulty or condition have a right to support from the University taking into consideration the limits of support the University can provide.
- 3.4 Where possible students are expected to inform the University at the earliest opportunity of any difficulties they are having to allow the University to support and advise them as necessary.
- 3.5 Students are advised in the first instance to consider raising their concerns with their personal tutor or directly with the confidential Counselling and Mental Health Team. Students can contact the Mental Health Service (mha@northampton.ac.uk) or Counselling Service (counsellors@northampton.ac.uk) directly who may be able to assist. Alternatively, students can speak with staff at the Student Information Desk in the Learning Hub who will be able to advise and explain to the student the services UON provide and how they can be accessed.

Staff

- 3.6 Staff should ensure that all students are given the same opportunities to succeed in their studies. Additional support for students experiencing mental health difficulties or conditions may be required to enable their progression.
- 3.7 Formally those needs may be communicated to tutors and the Exams Office via an AIR (Academic Inclusion Report) compiled by the Mental Health or Additional Student Support and Inclusion Services Teams (ASSIST).
- 3.8 If a student has not registered with the Mental Health or ASSIST Teams and there is a perceived need to offer adjustments due to a mental health difficulty or other disability, then temporary reasonable adjustments may be approved by Module Leaders and/or Programme Leaders until such time that the student's needs can be formally assessed by ASSIST or the Mental Health Service. The decision to implement temporary adjustments should only be made where there is an urgent or severe need to do so or the circumstances of the case necessitate it. Guidance on good practice

reasonable adjustments for disabled students and apprentices, listed by impairment type can be found under item 8.0¹.

- 3.7 Formally those needs may be communicated to tutors and the exam office via an AIR (Academic Inclusion Report) compiled by the Mental Health or ASSIST Teams.
- 3.8 Any disclosure made by a student will be treated in the strictest of confidence in line with section 4 of this policy.
- 3.9 Staff should be mindful of their role and limitations when assisting students with mental health difficulties or conditions and should seek advice from the Counselling and Mental Health Team.
- 3.10 Staff can raise concerns about a student's mental health via the [Student Health and Wellbeing- Emerging Concern Form](#) or by emailing mha@northampton.ac.uk.
- 3.11 If a member of staff has an urgent concern about a student, such as an immediate threat to self and/ or others, they should contact the emergency services or [NHFT Crisis Helplines](#). For medical emergencies or if a First Aider is required on campus, contact Security on 01604 892269. Staff should follow the [Students in Distress Flowchart](#).

University

- 3.11 The University is committed to providing Counselling and Mental Health support services to students to promote their wellbeing and their academic success.
- 3.12 The University has a responsibility to promote and publicise information and guidance about mental health issues and the available support to both staff and students to encourage open and inclusive discussion as issues arise.
- 3.13 The University's governance and oversight responsibilities regarding the Mental Health Policy are discharged through the Safeguarding Committee and by the Director of Library, Learning and Student Services. The policy must be reviewed annually.
- 3.14 The University will consider reasonable adjustments for students with mental health conditions. Our Mental Health Service and ASSIST teams work in partnership with students to make recommendations via AIR (Academic Inclusion Reports) to enable engagement and progression with study.

¹ These lists are not exhaustive and are not ordered by priority. If there is any doubt staff should seek guidance from the Mental Health Service or ASSIST.

- 3.15 All actions and decisions made under this policy will take account of the University's responsibilities as set out in the Safeguarding, Prevent and Vulnerable Student Policy.

4.0 Confidentiality and Disclosure

- 4.1 As with all matters of a personal nature we will respect the confidentiality of the information any student provides us with unless there is a considered risk and/or statutory obligation to share information, as detailed in section 5 of this policy.
- 4.2 We will not normally disclose personal information about individual students to third parties or external agencies without the explicit consent of the student. Our definition of a third party or external agency includes a student's family, guardian, sponsor, doctor or other health professional. This list is for example only and is not exhaustive. Exceptions to this principle can be found in section 5.
- 4.3 We would expect to share certain information about a student's condition within the University with those members of staff who need it in order to provide support and reasonable adjustments that might be necessary in line with the Equality Act (2010) and subsequent Amendment Regulations which came into effect on 1 January 2024. We would normally obtain the student's explicit consent in writing before we do so unless circumstances as outlined in section 5 were to arise.

5.0 Disclosure Without Consent

- 5.1 There may be a legal basis to override the requirement for explicit consent, such as when a student has made a power of attorney arrangement, or in an emergency, such as with ambulance services. In these instances, the University will apply Recital 46 under the UK GDPR legislation, whereby the lawful basis for sharing without consent is vital interests.
- 5.2 If we decide we need to disclose information about a student without their knowledge or in the event they refuse their consent, we will only do so in circumstances where we judge that there is a risk of significant harm to themselves or others or if there is an obligation arising from the requirements of their programme of study. Such a decision will not be taken lightly nor, except in an emergency, will it be taken without consultation with senior members of the University Leadership Team and/or the Safeguarding Lead.
- 5.3 The interests of the individual will always be considered in the context of the community as a whole and there may be rare occasions when the interests of others take priority over the interests of individuals. In such circumstance we may take action either under our Health, Wellbeing and

Fitness to Study policy or our Fitness to Practice policy as detailed in section 6 below.

- 5.4 Some professional programmes of study have specific requirements in relation to Fitness to Practice and these requirements may override an individual's stated preferences in relation to information sharing. This will be discussed with and explained to the affected student if this situation were to arise.
- 5.5 When responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties, we will endeavour to act in an individual's best interests, both for their personal safety, health and wellbeing and for their academic engagement and progress. Sometimes this will mean taking difficult decisions and on occasion taking decisions with which an individual may not agree. In such circumstances we will always explain the basis for the decision with the affected person and ensure that such decisions are fully recorded.

6.0 Conduct and Discipline

- 6.1 It is noted that experiencing mental health difficulties does not preclude a student from complying with our expected levels of behaviour in line with our Student Code of Conduct.
- 6.2 In a situation where a student's ability to participate in disciplinary procedures is affected by a mental health condition or difficulty, we will endeavour to deal with the situation sensitively, ensuring that the student is fit to participate and is supported in doing so.
- 6.3 The University offers some programmes which can lead to registration as a practising professional. The University therefore has a responsibility to the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and the wider public to consider matters which may bring into question a student's capability to meet professional codes of conduct. In such situations we reserve the right to review the student's suitability to continue their chosen course in line with our Fitness to Practise policy.
- 6.4 For other courses where it is felt that allowing a student to continue their studies, at that point in time, would be detrimental to either their health or ability to academically succeed we may review the student's suitability to continue their chosen course in line with our Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study policy.
- 6.5 Use of either of these policies will not necessarily preclude a student from continuing their studies at a later stage; however this may be subject to formal review under the terms of the policy, to determine if a return to study is in the student's best interest's, as outlined in 5.5.

7.0 Studying away from the University or at a Partner Institution

- 7.1 Distance from UON may place some constraints on the support we are able to offer but we will always endeavour to provide support and signposting as required at the time.
- 7.2 Partnership Institutions and Embedded Colleges of the University of Northampton are required to have an appropriate Mental Health Policy which meet the University's requirements whilst taking into account appropriateness for the local context. This will be confirmed when a partnership is approved and monitored as part of ongoing quality assurance processes.

8.0 Links to support services and guidance:

- 8.1 [Students in Distress- Guidance for Staff](#)
- 8.2 [Student Hub- Counselling and Mental Health Team](#)
- 8.3 [Need Help in a Crisis- Guidance for Students](#)
- 8.4 [Emerging Concerns Form for Staff](#)
- 8.5 [Guidance on common reasonable adjustments by impairment type](#)
- 8.6 [Advance HE- Understanding the interaction of competence standards and reasonable adjustments](#)

9.0 Links to student policy documents and guidance:

- 9.1 [Health Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- 9.2 [Fitness to Practise Policy](#)
- 9.3. [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#)
- 9.4 [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- 9.5 [Safeguarding, Prevent and Vulnerable Student Policy](#)

10.0 Summary Sheet:

Policy Title:	
UON Mental Health Policy	
Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):	
<p>The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's approach to supporting the mental health of its student body.</p> <p>This policy relates to all current and prospective students of the University of Northampton.</p>	
Owner and Department:	
Academic Registrar (Academic Registry)	
Principal contact:	
Head of Student Services (Library, Learning and Student Services)	
Dissemination and implementation plan:	
Via SEF Via web	
Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):	Senate, July 2020
Date of initial Senate approval:	July 2020
Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:	September 2020 for all new and continuing students
Proposed date of annual update:	July 2025
Date of last annual update:	July 2024
Proposed date of full review:	July 2025
Date of last full review:	N/A
Version number and date:	3.0 July 2024