

Student Mental Health Policy

Developed in collaboration with the AECC Students Union (ASU).

1. Vision/Institutional Statement on Mental Health Strategy

The World Health Organisation define Mental Health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.

As a health science institution we care about the mental health and wellbeing of all our people. At all levels of our organisation we encourage open conversations about mental health, everyone has a role to play. We strive to help each other and want anyone struggling with their mental health to have someone they can talk to and to know it is ok to seek help. We hope to reduce stigma around mental health and will make sure every student and member of staff knows where they can get any support they need.

The University College aims to ensure all students can achieve their academic potential and that no student is disadvantaged when applying to and studying here. We understand attending university for many students represents a major transition in their lives. For some, including those who have an existing mental health condition, the transition may be a difficult one to deal with.

We know that employees may also need support at times and want them to know they can be honest about how they are feeling – we care. We are aware as we go through the academic year different staff face different pressures and there are often pressures out of work too.

We are fully committed to supporting and improving both staff and student mental health.

2. Values

2.1 Our values set out to guide not just what we do but also how we do things.

Caring – Caring is demonstrated every day by expressing and accepting caring, compassion and respect in our personal and professional relationships. As a health sciences university, we treat people with respect and compassion on a daily basis.

Professional – We take pride in the quality and standards of the work that we do and the relationships we form. We are competent and reliable, working in an ethical way and seek

Passionate – We passionately believe in the power of education to inspire and transform lives, and in healthcare to enable and support people to reach their full potential, to be happy, live well and thrive.

Inclusive – We welcome diversity as an essential component of a healthy society and an enriched educational environment. We strive to create a safe and accessible space where all students and staff feel they belong and can flourish as part of our supportive community. Our patient services are centred on the needs of each individual, delivered in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Collaborative – To play our part in solving complex world problems we believe in the power of working together. Our multi-professional environment provides opportunities for collaborative working, interprofessional education and multidisciplinary patient care to benefit our students, staff and patients. We are small and specialist but together with our partners we can make a big difference.

3. Definition

For the purpose of this document mental health is described as ‘the emotional resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others’ dignity and worth.’

Mental health difficulties exist across a spectrum of states of mind and behaviours, from temporary responses to painful events to more debilitating and long – term conditions.

4. Aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- Promote a culture in which mental health and wellbeing are valued, positively promoted, mental health difficulties are recognised, and individuals are supported appropriately.
- For no individual to feel alone if they are struggling and for students to know how and when to seek help.
- Actively address and aim to reduce any stigma associated with mental health.
- Encourage students to disclose their mental health difficulties, in order that the university can identify the appropriate support.
- Ensure staff are trained to signpost students to relevant support networks.
- To promote consistency in the way individual cases are handled, guidelines are available for use by staff on how to identify and respond to students with mental health difficulties, including procedures for dealing with those at risk of harming themselves or others.
- Provide training in skills relevant to mental health throughout the year including Mental Health First Aid, Suicide First Aid

4.1 Purpose of aims

The objective is to ensure that academic and professional services staff, students and their peers are better able to recognise the warning signs of a mental health problem and to know when it is sufficiently serious to require referral to a professional. It is important that those involved in student welfare do not try to deal with problems that require expert assessment and management, although they may still have an important role to play in supporting the student in their studies or living arrangements. Early recognition and intervention will help to prevent problems escalating.

4.2 Principles

The Key Principles which will maintain and improve mental health and wellbeing throughout the AECC University College community, are the following:

1. To encourage and enable all students, as members of the University College community, to take responsibility for maintaining their own good mental health.
2. To support students with physical or mental disabilities to receive all practical and financial assistance available to them and ensure that all reasonable adjustments are made to enable them to undertake their programme of study/work responsibilities on as similar as possible a basis as non-disabled students.
3. To offer to those students who declare a need for help with disability or mental health issues, early assessment, triage and signposting to self-help resources, group and peer support actions, to individual counselling, or to external specialist psychological services.
4. To focus on positive steps to be taken to anticipate and overcome psychological difficulties which may stand in the way of academic achievement.
5. To provide the interventions needed to provide the maximum impact while grounding the services in real-world resource and time constraints.
6. To deliver a well-publicised and comprehensive range of services to meet the needs within the student populations.
7. To manage the immediate risk to individuals, teams, and others, from students experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing, recognising that in the medium to longer term such risks should be managed by appropriately qualified NHS mental health professionals.
8. To normalise students' experience of stress, anxious moments, and low mood and encourage a university-wide dialogue about mental health.
9. To plan for, and respond to, fluctuations in demand after arrivals, and at exam time, and throughout the year,
10. To measure and analyse the outcomes and effectiveness of all Wellbeing services to ensure continuous improvement in performance and timely access to services.
11. To strengthen and manage partnerships within and outside of the university community which will contribute to delivering maximum benefit to AECC University College students
12. To recognise that Student Services are not a crisis service and ensure that information about referral procedures to external NHS emergency services are well publicised and known.
13. To respect the confidentiality of sensitive personal information provided by students with mental health difficulties, unless there is a risk of harm to self or others.
14. To be receptive to feedback from our students and to demonstrate that improvement to the performance of services is based, in major part on student feedback.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 University College responsibilities

The University College will:

- Ensure students have access to its specialist student services who can support them with their mental health and wellbeing throughout their time at university. Where, in individual cases, student services believe that the mental-health or wellbeing concerns are sufficiently serious to warrant referral to an appropriate external medical or mental health professional or agency, the student will be encouraged and supported to avail of such help.
- Provide clear information to students and potential students about the content and nature of the course, the assessment methods and learning outcomes and articulate clearly any professional body requirements around fitness to practice, in order that the individual can understand what is required of them in undertaking the course.
- Work collaboratively as academic and professional services, to support students experiencing ill health to get back on track with their studies. Where a study break is needed, to support the student with the plan for their return to study and preparing them for this.
- Ensure all marketing and induction material contains clear information about the support available at AECC University College, both within the course and from other services.
- Ensure course-level practices do not unlawfully discriminate against students with mental health difficulties, but do include procedures for supporting students.
- To liaise with placement providers or other relevant third parties to put plans in place to support a student whilst on any placement/off-campus learning event.
- Consider and implement reasonable adjustments in teaching and learning for those students whose mental health difficulties are defined as a disability.

5.2 Student responsibilities

Students and prospective students have a responsibility to:

- Declare any pre-existing mental health condition prior to entry. The University College acknowledges the right of students and prospective students to keep the details of their disability/health condition confidential but a failure to disclose information may mean that in some cases reasonable adjustments cannot reasonably be put in place at the right time or cannot be made at all
- Consider the course learning outcomes, assessment methods and professional body requirements, to understand what is required of students on the course
- Subject to the right to confidentiality outlined above, advise the University College as soon as possible of any developing mental health difficulties and discuss the appropriate support required
- Notify the university college if something has triggered a previously managed condition which is now affecting their ability to fulfil the course requirements
- Be aware of their impact on others; taking and acting on advice from academic and Student Services staff
- See their personal tutor if they feel that their capacity to learn is being affected by changes in their mental health and well-being
- Be part of the AECC University College community where stigma related to mental health is actively addressed.

- Report any behaviour you are concerned about to student services or a member of staff. If needed the student reporting the concern should also seek support from student services or a member of their course team.

6. Pre-Admission Information and Advice

AECC University College welcomes applications from prospective students who fulfil the academic entry requirements for undergraduate, postgraduate and professional programmes of study, and who may also have disabilities and/or mental health difficulties. The University College strives to ensure that all applicants with a declared disability or with mental health difficulties receive appropriate information and advice prior to entry which will help them to decide the most suitable arrangements for them.

6.1 Support for New and Continuing Students

Induction

As part of the induction process for new students, Student Services advertises and provides sessions open to all students on the nature and extent of support services available to them from Student Services itself, and from other university services, including the Students' Union and external agencies. Student Services encourage students to declare their needs for support upon application. Where there is a declared disability, the Disability and Inclusion Advisor offers to meet with all new students to draw up an individual learning plan and advise on adjustments needed.

Ongoing support

The Wellbeing Adviser role is to support the wellbeing of all students, and to support those with mental health difficulties or difficult life circumstances. Students can seek advice and guidance for any concerns about their own or others' wellbeing. Wellbeing support is different to counselling, and focuses on confidential guidance with practical strategies for self-management. The Wellbeing Adviser can support referral to external services such as the NHS. Triage appointments are available daily.

Counselling

The counselling service provides support for managing any emotional or personal issues in a safe and confidential setting, in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. The team offer short-term solution focused counselling to support students to achieve their academic potential.

All services can be booked by emailing StudentServices@aecc.ac.uk or visiting the student services office.

7. Student – focused mental health and wellbeing resources and support

- **Student Services** are open 8.45 – 5pm whenever the University College is open and can be contacted at StudentServices@aecc.ac.uk
- **Samaritans**, a national charity providing emotional support to individuals in emotional distress, struggling to cope or at risk of suicide. To speak to someone in confidence, the Samaritans are available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week on 08457 909090 or 116 123 (free from mobiles and landlines). You can also email jo@samaritans.org
- **Papyrus**, the national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide

- **Student Minds**, a UK student mental health charity, providing information for the higher education community
- **Student Space** offers guidance and wellbeing advice to students, as well as a range of support services: <https://studentspace.org.uk/support-services>
- **NHS Services** – see your GP for referral to specialist teams or contact Steps2Wellbeing: <https://www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk/>
- **Mental Health First Aiders** (see posters around the University College or any member of ASU)
- **Connections** is a 24/7 Dorset healthcare helpline for anyone experiencing a crisis with their mental health. You can contact them on 0300 123 5440.
- **The University retreat** is open to all BU, AUB and AECC UC students - find out more here <https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/university-retreat>

8. Support to Study/Fitness to Practice policies

The university is committed to supporting students to reduce the impact of mental health difficulties on their studies, however it is recognised that occasionally a Support to Study or Fitness to Practice issue may arise.

Specific regulations can be found in the [Support to Study](#) and [Fitness to Practice](#) regulations documentation.

In situations where a student's ability participate in Support to Study/Practice proceedings is affected by mental health difficulties, the situation will be approached with due sensitivity and the student will be offered relevant support where appropriate, and in line with our study break procedures.

9. Related policies and procedures

[Exceptional Personal Circumstances](#)

[Support to Study](#)

[Fitness to Practice](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Academic Appeals policy](#)

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