

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed annually by the Document Lead. Any significant changes beyond the scope of an annual review will require the approval of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC).

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of all students at Bloomsbury Institute. We recognise that good mental health is essential for academic success and personal development, and we are committed to fostering a positive, healthy, and supportive environment.

Higher education represents a key transitional period for many students, bringing new experiences that can be challenging, stimulating, and complex. While this environment provides opportunities for growth, the intensity of life within higher education may strain mental health and exacerbate pre-existing difficulties.

This policy is designed for students. Staff members who have concerns about support for their own mental health or that of another staff member should seek advice from our People and Development team about what support can be put in place.

2. Definitions and terminology

The World Health Organization (WHO)¹ defines mental health as "a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".

Mental health difficulties refer to changes in mental wellbeing that cause considerable distress and impact daily functioning. A mental health diagnosis refers to a long-term condition affecting daily functioning.

3. Why it matters

Evidence shows that students experiencing mental health difficulties are more likely to withdraw from their place of study, underperform academically, and are less likely to progress to graduate-level employment or postgraduate study. Conversely, good mental health whilst studying is associated with enhanced concentration, creativity, academic performance, and extra-curricular engagement.

4. Mental health and mental illness

Defining mental health is a highly individual pursuit, however for the purposes of this document we define mental health and wellbeing as having the emotional resilience to cope with everyday pressures, enjoy life and undertake productive work while having a belief in one's own and other's worth. It is not just the absence of mental illness.

Mental illness is a term used for a condition that affects an individual's mood, behaviour and thoughts in a way which is distressing and/or impairs functioning. Throughout this document, the term 'mental health difficulties' is used in a broad sense to include:

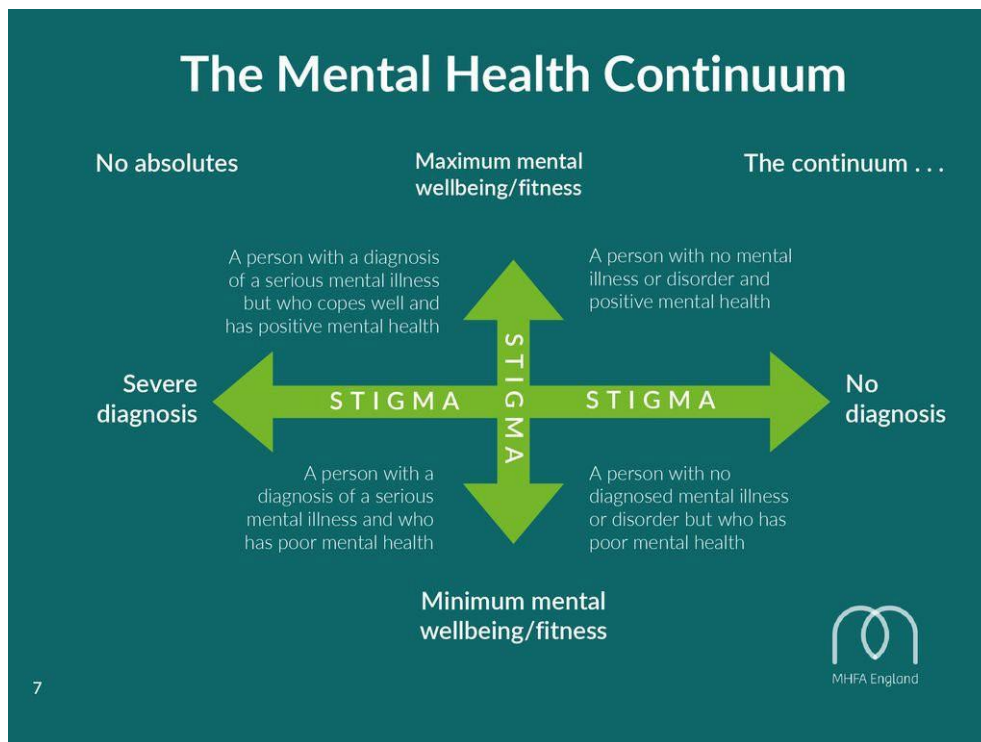
- Long-term mental illness or psychiatric conditions – which may be classified as a disability under the Equality Act (2010)².
- Emerging mental health problems which may develop into conditions which require ongoing support or intervention.
- Temporary debilitating mental health conditions or reactions which impact on a student's ability to fulfil their academic potential

It can be helpful to view mental health as a spectrum. Everyone falls somewhere on this spectrum and will move around it throughout their life. The diagram below can be helpful in recognising that someone

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

can have a diagnosed mental illness and still have good mental wellbeing and equally someone can be without a diagnosis but still be experiencing a high level of distress.



MHFA England (2016)

Many people with mental health difficulties manage well on their own without needing extra help or adjustments. Here's a simplified view of how to support them:

4.1 Effective self-management

Some individuals with mental health difficulties:

- Have developed their own coping strategies
- Already have support systems in place
- May not need or want additional support or adjustments

4.2 Supportive Approach

To help these individuals, focus on:

- Understanding and Empathy: Be sensitive to their situation.
- Accepting Differences: Embrace diversity in mental health experiences.
- Recognising Triggers: Be aware of activities that might increase anxiety for specific people.
- Fostering Acceptance: Create an inclusive environment without compromising privacy.

This approach emphasises respecting individual preferences and promoting a supportive atmosphere without assuming everyone needs formal interventions.

5. Supporting legislation

Mental health legislation in the UK plays a crucial role in protecting the rights and wellbeing of individuals experiencing mental health difficulties. Three key pieces of legislation are particularly relevant in this context:

5.1 The Mental Health Act (2007)

This Act amended the Mental Health Act 1983 and introduced significant changes to mental health care and treatment. It redefined mental disorder, introduced Supervised Community Treatment, and expanded the roles of mental health professionals. The Act also improved patient safeguards and introduced independent mental health advocates (IMHAs) for qualifying patients.

5.2 The Equality Act (2010)

This legislation protects individuals from discrimination based on certain protected characteristics, including disability. Health problems may be considered a disability under this Act if they have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The Act covers various areas of life, including employment, education, and access to services.

5.3 The Data Protection Act and UK GDPR

These laws govern how personal information, including health data, is collected, processed, and protected. They grant individuals specific rights regarding their personal data, such as the right to access, rectify, and erase information. In the context of mental health, these laws are particularly important for protecting sensitive health information and ensuring individuals have control over their personal data.

These three pieces of legislation work together to safeguard the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties, define disability in relation to mental health, and regulate the handling of personal information.

6. Roles, rights and responsibilities

Staff members play a crucial role in supporting students' mental health at Bloomsbury Institute:

6.1 Responsibilities of staff

- Exercise duty of care when dealing with students
- Treat students with dignity and respect
- Recognise the boundaries of their roles
- Uphold confidentiality
- Contribute to building a non-stigmatising community

6.2 Key actions for staff

Staff should be aware of potential indicators of mental health difficulties in students, such as:

- Behavioural changes (e.g. withdrawal, attendance changes)
- Cognitive changes (e.g. lack of concentration, mood swings)
- Physical changes (e.g. weight changes, decline in personal hygiene)

6.3 Providing Support

- Offer or seek appropriate assistance if a student shows signs of mental health difficulty
- Know when and how to refer students to specialised support services
- Training and development
- Participate in mental health awareness training offered by the institution
- Develop skills to feel confident in approaching and supporting students

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health of a student, who is not in distress, may like to contact the Disability and Wellbeing Team for advice. This conversation does not necessarily require the student's identity to be disclosed or shared with the Team.

6.4 Limitations

- Staff are not expected to replicate NHS mental health services.
- Bloomsbury Institute does not offer crisis services or out-of-hours support.
- By fulfilling these responsibilities, staff members play a vital role in creating a supportive environment that promotes positive mental health and wellbeing for all students.

6.5 Students

Students should:

- Help create a non-stigmatising community.
- Seek support when needed.
- Be mindful of personal limits when supporting peers.

7. Scope and limitations

7.1 Who this policy covers

- All current and active students with mental health conditions or difficulties.
- All current and active students enrolled at the institution, regardless of their programme or level of study.

7.2 Support for prospective students

- Some support may be available before starting at Bloomsbury Institute
- Varies between teams. For example, mentoring and welfare support are not available to prospective students.

7.3 What this policy doesn't do

- This policy is not a replacement for external community mental health services.

- It does not replicate NHS Mental Health provision.

7.4 Limitations of services

- Bloomsbury Institute does not offer a crisis service.
- Its services are not available outside regular office hours.

8. Support available

Bloomsbury Institute offers several support services for students with mental health difficulties:

8.1 Disability and Wellbeing Office

The Disability and Wellbeing Office at Bloomsbury Institute provides tailored support for students with disabilities or additional needs, ensuring an inclusive learning environment. Services include personalised disability support plans, academic adjustments, access to assistive technology, and mental health support. They also assist with Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) applications (disability@bil.ac.uk)⁴.

8.2 Mental Health First Aiders

Mental Health First Aiders play a crucial role in providing initial support to individuals experiencing mental health challenges. They are trained to recognise early signs of mental ill-health, offer non-judgmental listening, and guide individuals towards appropriate professional help or resources. While they are not mental health professionals, their role focuses on early intervention, promoting recovery, and fostering a supportive environment to reduce stigma around mental health issues. The list of Mental Health First Aiders can be accessed through our Canvas Wellbeing Module.

8.3 Self-help and Online Resources

We have a range of self-help and online resources that are accessible to students through [Canvas](#). This includes a list of organisations offering support across various areas such as mental health, eating disorders, substance abuse, and domestic violence.

8.4 Wellbeing Programme

The Institute's Wellbeing Programme offers a diverse range of activities to support students' mental health and overall wellbeing.

The programme aims to:

- Give students a chance to pause and reflect
- Help find inner calm and balance
- Enhance overall life satisfaction

By participating, students can:

- Take a break from their busy schedules
- Learn techniques for personal growth

³ International students are not eligible for DSA

- Discover ways to achieve a more fulfilling life

This programme recognises that a balanced, centred approach to life can significantly improve a student's wellbeing and academic experience.

8.5 Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success team (SEWS)

The SEWS team at Bloomsbury Institute provides comprehensive support services to students throughout their academic journey. They help with various aspects of student life, including mental health and wellbeing support, academic guidance, and personal development, operating with an open-door policy to ensure students always have someone available to talk to (sews@bil.ac.uk).

8.6 Specialist Mental Health Mentoring

Specialist Mental Health Mentoring supports students with a mental health condition who are studying within higher education and may not be eligible for DSA. The support focuses on how their mental health condition impacts their studies, wellbeing and study-life balance. This service is provided by an external agency. If students are interested in accessing mental health mentoring support, they should contact their university's Disability and Wellbeing team (disability@bil.ac.uk).

9. Academic support

9.1 Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes made to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to education, services, and opportunities. These adjustments aim to remove or reduce barriers that might put students with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers. However, students are advised to contact staff in our Disability and Wellbeing Office as early as possible to discuss and agree any appropriate reasonable adjustments and support arrangements.

9.2 Extension requests

Students may request an extension if unexpected circumstances prevent them from submitting work on time. The Institute considers several factors when deciding whether to grant an extension:

- The nature of the student's difficulty
- Whether the problem could have been anticipated
- How much the situation was beyond the student's control

Students should submit extension requests through SSP as soon as they realise they may miss a deadline, providing any necessary evidence to support their case.

9.3 Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances

Students facing serious, unexpected challenges that hinder their ability to complete assignments or attend exams may be eligible for mitigating/extenuating circumstances consideration. These circumstances typically include:

- Severe illness
- Significant personal life disruptions
- Events beyond the student's control or foresight

If a mitigating/extenuating circumstances claim is approved, students are usually granted an opportunity to complete the affected assessment at a later date, typically during the next available submission period. Mitigating/extenuating circumstances are designed to address exceptional situations that interfere with academic performance beyond normal difficulties. Examples may include:

- Bereavement of a close family member
- Acute medical conditions requiring intervention
- Being a victim of a crime
- Jury duty
- Maternity/paternity leave

To request mitigating circumstances:

- Submit an application within the specified timeframe.
- Provide relevant supporting evidence (e.g., medical certificates, official documents).
- Explain how the circumstances impacted your ability to complete the assessment.

For comprehensive information and specific procedures, students should consult their awarding body's mitigating/extenuating circumstances policy or contact their academic support services (academic.admin@bil.ac.uk).

9.4 Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies and Deferral

If a student feels unable to continue their studies due to a disability or long-term health condition, they have several options available:

- **Withdrawal:** Withdrawal is a decision to stop your studies completely. This decision can be made by the student [voluntary withdrawal] or by Bloomsbury Institute [withdrawal for non-engagement or other reasons]. Non-engagement essentially means not engaging with any formal scheduled academic activities. This includes, for example, missing classes or scheduled online activities, not engaging with the VLE and non-submission of assessments.
- **Study Break/Suspension of Studies:** A study break (also known as suspension of studies) is a decision to stop your studies temporarily. This decision can be made by you to suspend your studies, you will have to request a suspension which must be formally agreed by your Course Leader and the University partner will have to approve the request.
- **Deferral:** Deferral is a decision to postpone the start of your studies temporarily. This decision can be made by you [voluntary deferral], or by Bloomsbury Institute [institution deferral].

Students considering any of these options are strongly encouraged to consult with the Student Advice and Engagement Manager to understand the implications of their decision (sews@bil.ac.uk).

International students must also discuss withdrawal, study break or deferral plans with the Compliance team (visa.compliance@bil.ac.uk), as this will affect their visa sponsorship.

9.5 Fitness to study

This policy recognises that students must possess the physical, mental, and emotional capacity to participate fully in their chosen programmes without compromising their own wellbeing or that of others. Bloomsbury Institute is committed to supporting students in maintaining their fitness to study through various resources. Should concerns arise regarding a student's fitness to study, the Institute will follow procedures according to the relevant awarding body to assess the situation and provide appropriate interventions or accommodations, always prioritising the student's wellbeing and academic success.

10. Confidentiality

Bloomsbury Institute recognises the sensitivity of students' mental health information and aims to protect their privacy while ensuring their wellbeing. Here's a simplified version of the Institute's approach to handling such information:

10.1 Confidentiality assurances

- Limited Sharing: Mental health information is generally not shared with other departments, parents, students, or external agencies without the student's explicit consent.
- Transparency: Students are typically informed about who will receive their information and why.

10.2 Exceptions to confidentiality

- **Urgent situations:** In time-sensitive cases requiring quick support:
 - The Institute will try to obtain student permission
 - If impossible, they may act without permission for serious issues in the student's best interest
- **Emergency circumstances:** In rare cases of immediate danger to the student or others:
 - Information may be disclosed to appropriate third parties or agencies without permission

This policy aims to balance student privacy with necessary support and safety measures, encouraging students to seek help when needed.

11. Relevant Policies¹

- [Admissions Policy \(Birkbeck, University of London Degrees\)](#)
- [Admissions Policy \(Wrexham University Degrees\)](#)
- [Assessment Procedures – Birkbeck University of London Degrees](#)
- [Assessment Procedures – Wrexham University Validated Degrees](#)
- [Assessment Procedures – University of Northampton Validated Degrees](#)
- [Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

[Dignity and Respect Policy](#)[Engagement Policy Wrexham University and University of Northampton Validated Degrees](#)

¹ All policies are available at: <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/section-3/>
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- [**Extenuating Circumstances Procedure \(Wrexham University\)**](#)
- [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
- [**Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures \(Birkbeck University\)**](#)
- [Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures \(University of Northampton\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Student Disability Policy](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- [Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies and Deferral Policy](#)