

University of Westminster

Student Well Being Strategy

2017

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Responsibility	Student Experience Committee
Produced by	Director of Student Affairs (David Shacklady)
Approval Date	8 th February 2017
Review Date	Annual Review and by Annual Action Plan
Approved by	Academic Council
Consultation via	Learning Future – Student Support & Engagement Group; Senior Personal Tutor Group; Equality & Diversity Task Force; Student Experience Committee.

Student Well Being Strategy

Scope of Strategy

The Student Well Being Strategy will be formulated and implemented across the university in a partnership between faculties, corporate services and the Student Union.

The University of Westminster believes that wellbeing is fundamental to a positive student learning experience. Students who are happy, confident and able to establish meaningful relationships are better placed to achieve good academic outcomes during their studies.

A key principle for informing an effective wellbeing strategy should be to promote a safe and supportive environment for students, which celebrates equality, diversity and inclusivity. A wellbeing strategy should also to promote a positive, physical, social and mental state and create an environment where students feel secure, healthy and, as far as possible, happy.

Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's own life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes to wellbeing. Also the attainment of high self-worth, positive values and self-esteem are important contributory factors. Wellbeing research suggests that experiencing positive emotions over time can lead to the build-up of valuable personal internal resilience.

Six key themes have been identified to be addressed by the strategy:

1. Mental Health
2. Social Engagement & Belonging
3. Behaviour & Tolerance
4. Physical Health
5. Physical Environment (including Accommodation)
6. Personal Finances & Hardship

We anticipate that the wellbeing strategy will be accompanied by an **action plan**. The intention is that these actions should lead to long-term, sustainable improvements in the health and wellbeing of the student population. Actions will include:

- a) those aimed at specific groups of students, including ways of recognising vulnerable students;
- b) those aimed at specific points in the academic calendar (E.g. on admission/examinations);
- c) development of the University's approach to fitness to study, including ways of mitigating the risk of students becoming unfit to study, but also providing appropriate and dignified exit routes for students;
- d) development of early resolution to deal with cases where students are affecting others;
- e) pan-university initiatives to promote wellbeing including healthy living.

This strategy recognises the value of pre-entry advice and support for students to ensure well-being and access to services (E.g. early disclosure of disability/transfer of care plans/cultural awareness for international students). It also seek to improve and signpost better out-of hours services and links with external providers.

1. Mental Well Being

Follow good practice, as outlined in 'Universities UK: Student Mental Health and Well Being Guide'.

- Embed good practice into University Strategic Planning and Operational Practice
- Integrate policy and procedure into the work of departments and faculties through clear guidance
- Consult & collaborate with Students Unions and Societies in formulating and implementing mental-health policies and procedures and in identifying areas for improvement.
- Establish clear links with the communities within the university and with local statutory and voluntary organisations to ensure timely and appropriate referrals.
- Ensuring that a wide range of policies are available to ensure the retention, support and progress of students with mental health issues.
- Make sure that arrangements are in place and applicable to partners and collaborators (E.g. partner colleges and placement providers)
- Regularly review and assess the services in respect of demand and effectiveness. Setting benchmark standards to ensure adequate resourcing.
- Report into the university at an appropriate level the state of mental health & well-being of the student body.

2. Social Engagement & Belonging

This can be defined as students making social and emotional connections with fellow students and the local community.

- Foster a sense of belonging amongst students within the University community
- Provide students with the space to meet *socialise and integrate* with each other, the university and wider society
- Promote the building of student clubs and societies, to support social engagement and good health
- Encourage students to enhance their wellbeing by interacting outside of their academic studies
- Encourage social exchange with other students and the local community, in the form of offering and receiving help

3. Behaviour & Tolerance

The behaviour of other students and staff can have a profound impact on the wellbeing of an individual student.

- The University's core values encompass freedom of thought and expression, and freedom from discrimination. All members of the University community are expected to treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration, and have the right to expect professional behaviour from others. Appropriate behaviour is fostered by a University culture which encourages positive, supportive and open interactions.
- The University recognises that to work and study effectively, students need a climate of equal opportunity in which they are respected and valued for their contribution, irrespective of their sex, gender identity (including reassignment), marital, parental or partnership status, race, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability, sexuality, religion or belief, or age. The University will not tolerate the harassment or bullying of any member of its community by another.

- The 'Diversity & Dignity at Work and Study Policy' provides guidance and advice on dealing with inappropriate behaviour (including bullying, harassment, victimisation, or discrimination) that may affect the wellbeing of individuals within the University.
- Issues around sexual harassment and violence to be addressed through cultural change including the encouraging of students as 'active bystanders' (E.g. the Extra Mile).

4. Physical Health

This can be defined as the body's ability to function efficiently and effectively in work, study and leisure activities and to meet emergency situations.

- To enable students to have access to a broad range of physical and recreational activities, in order to enhance their level of physical fitness
- To create a greater awareness of the opportunities available to students in relation to physical and recreational activities
- To create a greater awareness and understanding of the benefits of physical fitness in relation to student health and wellbeing
- To identify and breakdown the barriers facing students in relation to participation in physical and/or recreational activity

5. Physical Environment (including accommodation/teaching spaces/libraries)

Public Health England has defined the Physical Environment as "the material and tangible conditions in which we live" (natural, built, socio-economic and cultural). The physical environment is recognised as an important determinant on the wellbeing of students. The aim should be to enhance the quality of life that results from a healthy relationship between the individual and the physical environment.

- To promote the development of a safe, secure and aesthetically pleasing University environment
- To support the creation of buildings that engender a sense of community and belonging, allowing students to interact and develop healthy, enriching relationships and interests
- To support the creation of spaces and places on each campus, fit to serve a community of varied interests and needs. For example, designated quiet spaces, student social space, outdoor spaces that lend themselves to relaxation and calm as well as physical activity
- To build awareness of, and engagement with, environmental issues, encouraging individual responsibility in relation to sustainability
- To support students in finding suitable living accommodation and assist students who may find themselves homeless
- To support student living in University of Westminster accommodation (owned or nominated).
- To ensure that the University complies with Health & Safety Guidance in all of its activities.

6. Personal Finances & Hardship

This can be defined as encouraging and supporting students to become independent when it comes to managing their own financial affairs.

- To create a greater awareness and understanding of money matters amongst students
- To support students encountering financial difficulties
- To encourage students to become more responsible when it comes to managing their personal finances
- To allocate hardship funds on an equitable and transparent basis to students in need.

7. Key Players (in consulting on the strategy and action plan)

There are a number of key players who have been consulted on the strategy and on co-ordinating a University action plan. These include:

- Admissions
- ODSHW
- Counselling
- Disability Team
- Senior Tutor Group
- Faculty Registry Managers Group
- Student Health Service
- Student Union
- Relevant Student Societies – Mental Health/Disability
- Student Advice Team
- Student Funding Team
- Estates (Accommodation)
- Interfaith Advice
- Corporate & Social Responsibility

8. Informing the Strategy

There is already a wealth of documentation on well-being that will inform the strategy and action plan. These include:

- Universities UK: Student Mental Health and Well Being Guide
- Recommendations from the Student Engagement & Support Group
- Equality Act 2010
- Quality Code

9. Policies & Procedures

There are already a number of existing policies and procedures in the area of well-being that will need to be audited and referenced in the formulation of a university strategy. There may also be gaps identified and amendments required to ensure coherence.

- Single Equality Policy
- Safety and Well Being Policy
- Fitness to Study Procedure
- Fitness to Practice Policy
- Fit to Sit
- Disability Framework
- Mental Health Guidance
- Safeguarding Policy
- Dignity & Diversity at Work & Study Policy
- Personal Tutor Policy

David Shacklady
23rd January 2017