

Policy Redesign Project

All policies and procedures are being reviewed as part of this project. This document is pending review, but remains in effect until the review is carried out.

Statement on Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Establishment: Vice-Chancellor, 21 November 2012

Last Amended: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), 8 February 2016

Nature of Amendment: Change of Responsible Officer

Date Last Reviewed:

Responsible Officer: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students)

1. Preamble

Flinders University is committed to providing a supportive environment that assists students to realise their full academic potential and to successfully complete their chosen course of study. Accordingly, the University promotes the importance of assisting all students to maintain mental health and wellbeing by fostering resilience through the provision of a range of educational, preventative and support initiatives. The University is also committed to providing a supportive environment for students with mental health problems.

The University recognises that students with serious mental health problems may require professional intervention that is beyond the scope of University student support services.

2. Definition

The concept of 'mental health' as it is used in this statement is broader than the mere absence of mental disorder. Mental health encompasses a broad spectrum of experiences from mental (psychological-emotional) wellbeing to mental ill-health. This continuum of experience incorporates a range of biological, psychological, social, cultural and historical factors that affect the thoughts, emotions and behaviour of an individual when faced with life's situations.

3. Responsibilities and Expectations

3.1 The University will:

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- offer all students opportunities for mental health education and resilience/skills development;
 - provide culturally safe teaching and learning spaces as an essential part of caring for students' mental health and wellbeing;
 - provide students who are experiencing mental health problems with access to University support services and referral to external services where appropriate;
 - ensure that any information provided to the University in confidence regarding the mental wellbeing of a student is kept confidential and is only divulged with the consent of the student. Subject to the overriding nature of clause 4 below, where consent is given, information will be shared only for the purposes of providing support, care or protection for the student or for fellow students or staff and only on a 'need to know' basis;
 - assist students who are experiencing mental health problems to realise their full academic potential and to successfully complete their chosen course of study;
 - provide support to those students identified as being at risk of developing mental health problems through the timely use of support services and education;
 - support staff in their dealings with students experiencing mental health problems through mechanisms including advice from Health, Counselling and Disability Services and mental health awareness training;
 - ensure that students who offer support to fellow students with mental health problems are themselves supported;
 - support students and staff who have been affected by an incident or a student's distress;
 - build on existing links and seek to establish new partnerships with relevant external agencies in order that students with complex mental health needs can have their needs met.
 - meet its obligations prescribed by statutory or professional requirements relating to student welfare and performance (eg fitness for practice)

3.2 Students experiencing mental health problems:

- are encouraged to declare their support needs to disability services staff at the earliest opportunity;
- will be treated fairly, sensitively and with respect;
- can expect to study in a supportive, non-stigmatising, non-judgemental academic environment;
- will have access to a range of support services including the Health, Counselling and Disability Services;
- will, where appropriate within the constraints of the University's Assessment Policy and Procedures, be supported in negotiating reasonable adjustments to assessment in relation to their studies;
- can expect to receive clear information on the nature and parameters of the support that is available to them;

4. Welfare and Safety

The welfare and safety of Flinders University students and staff, and visitors to the University, is the first priority in any situation. In circumstances where there are serious concerns about a student's mental health and a potential risk to themselves or others, then ensuring the safety of those involved takes precedence over any duty of confidentiality that may be owed in relation to a particular student. No member of the University community should go beyond their level of competence in trying to advise or support a student and should, as soon as possible, refer the matter to an appropriately skilled staff member or appropriate external agency/support service.

5. Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

This statement will guide the development of a Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, which will identify specific strategies and outcomes. Progress on the Action Plan will be monitored via reporting on the University's Disability Action Plan.

6. Related Flinders University policies, procedures and guidelines

- [Disability Policy](#);
- [Equal Opportunity Policy](#);
- [Assessment Policy and Procedures](#);
- [Assessment Policy and Procedures - Guidelines for Reasonable Adjustment to Assessment and Teaching Methods for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Complaints Policy](#);
- [Work Integrated Learning Policy](#).