



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

The University of Adelaide

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

adelaide.edu.au

KAURNA ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kaurna people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands on which the University of Adelaide was built. We also acknowledge and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural practices and cultural sensitivities. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Kaurna people to country and we respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs.



VISION

The University of Adelaide is an inclusive and supportive community that promotes positive mental health and wellbeing, is responsive to the diverse range of student health and wellbeing needs, and recognises that positive mental health and wellbeing is a fundamental contributor to student success throughout their educational journey and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that university students are a high risk population for mental ill-health and diminished wellbeing. The development of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 - 2024 demonstrates the University's commitment to supporting student mental health and wellbeing throughout their academic ventures.

The Strategy acknowledges that an essential foundation for students to realise their full potential is a commitment to a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing, informed by social, economic, cultural, political and geographical factors. It aligns with the recognition that 'wellness is not simply the absence of disease or infirmity'¹, and requires the spectrum of treatments, solutions and preventative strategies to wellbeing. The strategy acknowledges that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to supporting student mental health and wellbeing and recognition of the diverse needs, skills and experience of students is essential to the strategy's success.

To ensure the Strategy reflects the specific needs of University of Adelaide students and staff, a tailored consultation process was utilised.

Guided by an Expert Panel, drawing on specific staff at the University and student representation, the consultation engaged with students and staff throughout the development of the Strategy. Targeted student and staff workshops and focus groups identified the key action areas, goals and enablers. All students and staff were invited to provide feedback through online forums and questionnaires. The success of this process will help inform the collaborative approach for future operationalisation of the Strategy.

A key priority emerged through consultation, identifying high-quality, evidence-based services, programs and activities with flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the University community, across the full wellbeing spectrum. This, coupled with commitment from our University leaders, supportive policies and procedures and safe environments, will provide students with the greatest opportunity to achieve their academic goals, foster a sense of belonging and contribute to their chosen fields and communities beyond completion of their studies.

Approach

The Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2024 was developed through a comprehensive staff and student consultation process. This Strategy recognises the multi-campus structure of the University, its diverse student population and the role the entire University community plays to ensure its success.

This Strategy has also been guided by existing and emerging best-practice literature including:

- Australian University Mental Health Framework. Melbourne: Orygen 2020
- Under the radar. The mental health of Australian university students. Melbourne: Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, 2017
- A Framework for Promoting Student Mental Wellbeing in Universities, Enhancing Student Wellbeing, 2016
- Positive education approaches and definitions³ and;
- Health Promotion Frameworks including the [Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and Healthy Universities](#) in the UK.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This Strategy is a culmination of a strong University collaboration, drawing on expert knowledge from students and staff across the University. The Student Health & Wellbeing team extend their sincere thanks to members of the Expert Panel who have guided the development of this Strategy, and to students and staff who contributed and shared their voices through workshops, focus groups, online discussions and survey participation.

OUR COMMITMENT

Through this comprehensive staff and student consultation process, we have developed key commitments and strategic principles to guide all activities to support student mental health and wellbeing.

Through this Strategy we will:

- Adopt a holistic approach to collectively and collaboratively promote and support student mental health and wellbeing.
- Recognise the essential role of students in the design, delivery and evaluation of programs, projects and initiatives.
- Recognise and celebrate the diverse experiences of students and staff in promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- Prioritise and respond to the diverse needs of students identified as being at increased risk of mental ill-health and those who may benefit from differentiated approaches.
- Utilise evidence-based practice, rigorous evaluation and feedback to inform continuous improvement.

Strategic Principles

- Student Participation, Partnership and Engagement.
- Collaboration, Coordination and Co-design.
- Flexibility and Responsiveness to needs.
- Whole-of-University Approach.
- University Leadership and Commitment.
- Diversity and Inclusion.
- Research, Evaluation and Innovation.



ACTION AREAS

01

University Culture

Goal: Create a safe, supportive and respectful culture that is conducive to optimal individual mental health and wellbeing.

Enablers:

- A cultural commitment to listening and responding to students.
- University leaders who set the tone and influence a whole-of-University commitment to student mental health and wellbeing.
- Mechanisms that facilitate student participation, partnership, engagement and a sense of belonging.
- Collaborative planning informed by the student life cycle.
- Policies and procedures that recognise, and are inclusive of, our diverse student groups.
- Safe and respectful social, physical and online environments.

02

Learning Experience

Goal: Foster a flexible, engaging learning environment that recognises the mental health and wellbeing of students in its structure and delivery.

Enablers:

- Curriculum design and delivery that supports optimal individual mental health and wellbeing.
- Resourced and supported professional and academic staff.
- Provision of clear and consistent information on support, resources and program expectations.
- A culture of belonging to foster interaction and connection amongst peers.
- Policies and procedures that recognise diverse learning needs and experiences within the context of mental health and wellbeing.

03

Community Awareness

Goal: Build a knowledgeable University community with awareness and understanding to optimise individual mental health and wellbeing in all aspects of University life.

Enablers:

- Reduced stigma and an inclusive community attitude to mental ill-health.
- Support for an early intervention approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- A community culture that recognises, understands and engages in a holistic approach to optimal individual mental health and wellbeing, taking into account the specific needs of diverse student groups.
- Recognition of the existing strengths of students.

04

Capacity Building

Goal: Build upon the resilience of students, and the skills and knowledge of staff supporting students, to navigate mental health and wellbeing challenges.

Enablers:

- Mechanisms to ensure consistent, timely, University-wide information and responses in support of help seeking behaviour.
- Evidence-based resources.
- A University community with improved mental health literacy.
- Institutional embedded practices for strengthening optimal mental health and wellbeing.
- Inclusive and informed policies and procedures that recognise and are inclusive of, diverse student groups.

05

Service Delivery and Response

Goal: Deliver high-quality, evidence-based, appropriate, accessible and timely services to support optimal individual student mental health and wellbeing.

Enablers:

- Allocation of appropriate funding and resources.
- Recognition of the specific needs of students at higher risk of mental ill-health.
- Differentiated mental health and wellbeing approaches for identified student groups.
- Trained and resourced professional staff.
- Stepped care approach that offers a hierarchy of interventions to support individuals as their needs change.
- Referral pathways to Specialist University and community-based services.



Implementation

The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy articulates the high-level purpose and scope and outlines the key priorities through action areas, associated goals and enablers to support student mental health and wellbeing over the next four years. This Strategy provides overarching guidance to inform the development of an operationalised implementation plan in partnership with students and staff. The implementation plan will detail specific outcomes, activities, timelines and measures with responsibility and accountability aligned to relevant areas across the University.

Research and Evaluation

This Strategy demonstrates a commitment to continuous learning, improvement and innovation through evaluation, participation, partnerships and research.

Overall wellbeing indicators aligned with student engagement, participation and academic outcomes will inform the success of the Strategy.

This strategy will work in concert with the University of Adelaide:

- [Student Retention and Success Plan 2019 - 2021](#)
- [Tarrkarri Turrka Strategy 2013 - 2023](#); and
- [Disability Inclusion and Action Plan 2021 - 2024](#).

Key outcome measures within these plans will complement targeted evaluations embedded within the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Implementation Plan.

The feedback loop, through sharing progress and outcomes with both staff and students, is key to create a sense of community, shared ownership of mental health and wellbeing and ensures the University remains flexible and responsive to emerging needs.

The Strategy will seek to leverage opportunities to engage in, and contribute more broadly to the Australian Government Science and Research Priorities for Health¹ through relevant research partnerships.

Governance

The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy resides under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Deputy Vice-President (Academic).

Progress will be reported annually to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and Academic Board. Updates and achievements within the implementation plan will be communicated to the University Community to foster connection, inform continuous improvement and ensure successes are celebrated.

Strategic Alignment

The Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy supports the University to achieve broader strategic objectives embedded within:

- [The University of Adelaide Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021 - 2024](#).
- [The University of Adelaide Student Experience Plan 2020 - 2023](#) which identifies the development and implementation of a sector-leading mental health and wellbeing strategy, and program of activities to support student health as a key deliverable within the Student Support and Services Experience component.
- [The Student Retention and Success Plan 2019 - 2021](#) identifies the development of an institution-wide mental health strategy as a priority (Strategy 2.5).
- [Tarrkarri Turrka \(Future Learning\) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy \(2013 - 2023\)](#).
- [The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(TEQSA\) Guidance Note: Wellbeing and Safety V1.2, 2018](#).
- The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) outlines key responsibilities within the [Higher Education Standards Framework 2015](#) that requires education providers to provide access to appropriate support services and to promote and foster an environment of wellbeing and safety for students both on campus and online.
- [The Higher Education Standards Panel Final Report - Improving retention, completion and success in higher education 2017](#), recommendation 8 that every institution should have an institution-wide mental health strategy and implementation plan. This recommendation was endorsed by The Federal Department of Education and Training.
- [The Education Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\) Act, 2000](#) forms the legal framework for institutions providing education to international students and identifies a number of specific Health & Wellbeing services required to be delivered by the University.
- [Australian Federal Government, Australia's Science and Research Priorities \(2015\)](#) "Australia's health needs must be addressed at both the individual and population level, and must recognise that health or "wellness" is not simply the absence of disease or infirmity. Good health requires the development of treatments, solutions and preventative strategies to improve physical and mental well-being. Research will be essential to building healthy and resilient communities throughout Australia¹".

Definitions

Mental health and wellbeing are intrinsically connected and guide the direction of the Strategy:

Mental health: An umbrella term that encompasses a continuum of mental health states, including both good mental health and poor mental health and everything in between. It relates to how people think and feel, and how they cope with and respond to stressors in everyday life. The state of an individual's mental health varies throughout life and may be influenced by social, psychological, biological and cultural elements².

Wellbeing: Flourishing refers to the experience of life going well. It is a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. Flourishing is synonymous with a high level of mental wellbeing, and it epitomises optimal mental health.³

Holistic approach: Physical, spiritual, social, emotional, environmental, intellectual approach to mental health and wellbeing⁴.

University community: Staff, students, volunteers, visitors, titleholders, contractors and consultants at campuses, sites and centres of the University of Adelaide are members of the University Community.

Student: A person enrolled at the University of Adelaide.

Student participation and engagement: Meaningful involvement of students in decision-making across the organisation. Recognising the diverse interests, skills and abilities of students to share their voices and contribute to student health and wellbeing, from consultation, collaboration, partnerships and student-led initiatives.

Students identified as being at increased risk of mental ill-health: Young people (aged up to 25 years), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, international students, rural and regional students, law and medicine students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, PhD students, students with disabilities and students with existing mental health conditions².

Student groups who may benefit from differentiated mental health and wellbeing approaches: Students who are the first in their family to attend university, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, LGBTIQ+ students and students with existing mental health conditions².



References

1. *Fact Sheet · Science and Research Priorities*, Australian Research Council, Australian Government, 2015.
2. *Orygen. Australian University Mental Health Framework*. Melbourne: Orygen 2020.
3. *Huppert FA. Psychological well-being: Evidence regarding its causes and consequences. Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being. 2009;1:137-164.*
4. *The University of Queensland, Mental Health Strategy, 2018 - 2020.*

FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES

Student Life
The University of Adelaide SA 5005 Australia

TELEPHONE +61 8 8313 0182

EMAIL studentwellbeing@adelaide.edu.au

 adelaide.edu.au/student/life

 facebook.com/uniofadelaide

 twitter.com/uniofadelaide

© The University of Adelaide.
Published April 2021 UA30008 IL
CRICOS 00123M

DISCLAIMER The information in this publication is current as at the date of printing and is subject to change. You can find updated information on our website at adelaide.edu.au or contact us on 1800 061 459. The University of Adelaide assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of information provided by third parties.