Equality and Diversity

Student Mental Health Policy

(under review September 2017)

1. Introduction

The purpose of the University's Mental Health Policy is to help ensure that the University provides a coherent institutional approach when responding to students with mental health problems.

The University has specific legal responsibilities towards students whose mental condition falls within the definition of disability under the law. This requires us to ensure that students with a well-recognised mental illness are not discriminated against and that reasonable adjustments are put in place to support their learning.

The University aims to provide a supportive environment that will help students with mental health difficulties to realise their full academic potential and to successfully complete their course. It also aims to facilitate and promote positive mental health and well-being by:

- Providing a range of support services, including a mental health advisor, a counselling service, a learning support service, student advisors based in the Student Life Centre and services provided through the Students' Union.
- Encouraging students with mental health difficulties to seek support.
- Having in place effective procedures for the disclosure of information in respect of students with mental health difficulties.
- Ensuring that the sources of support are clearly communicated to both prospective and current students.
- Promoting understanding and recognition of mental health difficulties.
- Providing guidance and training to staff involved in the support and care of those with mental health difficulties.
- Providing clear guidance on the confidentiality of personal information provided by students.

However, whilst the University is committed to providing a supportive environment, it is important to recognise that it is not a mental health facility nor is it a therapeutic community. There are, of necessity, limits to the extent of the support which can be provided and it is not the responsibility of the University to replicate services that already exist in the community and the NHS. The University also has its own procedures for the maintenance of good order and for safeguarding academic standards which will apply to all students irrespective of their medical condition or specific needs.
2. Services for Students (for contact details see Appendix 1)

I. Mental Health Advisor

The Mental Health Advisor is a member of the University's Student Support Unit. He contacts all prospective students who declare a mental health problem on their UCAS application, and sees current students who are referred to him. All students are offered an assessment interview so that the MHA can decide on appropriate adjustments and allowances, and the Director of Student Support (DOSS) and the Exam Office are notified of any recommendations.

If appropriate, students are advised to apply for the Disabled Student's Allowance, and the MHA arranges mentors and support workers, if recommended.

With the student's consent the MHA liaises with Residential Services, the student's GP, the Psychological and Counselling Services and members of the local psychiatric services.

II. The Health Centre

The Health Service provides General Medical Services to all its registered patients and this includes the provision of services and care for patients with mental health concerns. All University students, residing within the practice area, are eligible to register. The Health Service is an NHS GP Practice, independent and separate from the University. Information is never disclosed to a third party, including the University without a patient's permission. The only exception to this would be if it were believed that someone may come to serious harm if the information was not disclosed and the patient would be informed that confidentiality was to be broken.

For more information, see the Practice Leaflet or Health Centre Website.

III. Psychological and Counselling Services

Psychological and Counselling Services (PCS) offers free confidential therapy to all registered students of the University. We are an open access service at point of entry. All students are entitled to an initial meeting with a member of the staff team where they are invited to discuss their difficulties, some of the background to these and the kind of help they think they need. Should therapy be considered appropriate, we provide time limited interventions using cognitive behavioural and psychodynamic approaches on an individual and group basis. We also offer a number of specialist groups for eating disorders, stress management, depression, and confidence and have a specialist service for substance misuse.

We are able to offer formal risk assessment through our external psychiatrist, attend case conferences and liaise with families where relevant. We refer people in the direction of more suitable services should these factors arise in an initial meeting with a student, and we are able to make direct referrals to secondary or tertiary care.

PCS is not able to offer crisis intervention or open ended therapy, and has no facilities for in-patient admission. We cannot provide medication monitoring, a prescription service or psychiatric support, including key working, home visits and interventions which are best dealt with by the relevant NHS Trust.
IV. **Student Life Centre**

The Student Life Centre provides a broad range of information and welfare support.

The Student Life team provides general student advice and guidance about University life and resources and what to do if problems arise. Things we help with include progress related matters, attendance and engagement, withdrawal and processes such as Mitigating Evidence and how to get appropriate specialist help. We also provide general money advice; and funding advice in relation to hardship funds, scholarships and bursaries and non-UK student-finance schemes (e.g. US loans). There is also a dedicated role for health and well-being to ensure effective information and guidance is provided to the whole student community.

The Student Life Centre does not provide an 'emergency' or an 'out-of-hours' service. However, during working hours we will provide sensitive support to anyone experiencing extreme mental distress while appropriate services are contacted.

Student Life Advisors are also happy to act as a resource for the wider University community and will advise and support staff and students who have concerns about anyone’s mental health.

For more information see [www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre)

V. **Learning Support**

For students who require additional support with their studies, the Student Support Unit offers a range of provision. There are weekly Study Skills Workshops during term time, which are open to all Sussex students. The Service also offers advice, screening and formal assessment for students who may have specific learning difficulties and we arrange individual learning support with specialist tutors where there is agreed funding. Advice and assistance with applying for additional support is also available.

VI. **Sussex Regional Access Centre**

The Access Centre assesses students who have been referred by the funding authority for the Disabled Student’s Allowance. It assesses students' study strategies in relation to their needs and makes recommendations for how they can be supported through the use of assistive technology, as well as by non-technical means such as learning support. It also provides training in the use of specialist software.

VII. **The Chaplaincy**

Students use the Meeting House and Chaplaincy for a wide range of welfare issues, the majority of which are not related at all to religion, but have to do instead with the complexities of the human condition. Often they do so because they know they will be given both sympathetic as well as professional attention, but sometimes because a Chaplain can be seen with the minimum of delay.

VIII. **Residential Advisers**
Residential Advisers (RA) are returning students who live in University accommodation and have been trained in welfare and support procedures. RAs provide the initial point of contact for most students living in University-managed accommodation. RAs act as a resource by directing students to the relevant support structures provided by the University. RAs are supervised by and report all discipline and welfare related incidents to the Residential Student Support Manager.

The Residential Student Support Manager (RSSM) supervises the Residential Advisor scheme and co-ordinates support and discipline for the resident student body. The RSSM is supported by the Assistant Residential Student Support Officer who resides 'in situ' at the University and, who along with the Residential Student Support Manager provides pastoral support on an 'emergency call out' basis.

IX. Students' Union

The Students’ Union Advice & Representation Centre provides information, advice and representation on various issues, including money, student funding, benefits/tax credits, housing, employment law and University-related problems. The Centre focuses on providing independent representation and advocacy – for example, representing students at academic misconduct and disciplinary hearings; advising upon academic appeals; challenging student funding bodies’ decisions; assisting students to apply for discretionary student funding; helping students claim welfare benefits (such as Disability Living Allowance and Employment & Support Allowance); appeal benefit authorities’ decisions and helping students negotiate with their landlords.

Many of the Centre’s clients have mental health difficulties and the Centre’s Advisers have considerable experience in dealing with the range of practical issues with which such students present.

The Centre has an Information Area with a telephone students can use free of charge for welfare-related calls, a PC with useful websites bookmarked and a range of leaflets and other publications (both self-produced and from external organisations) on relevant issues, including mental health and local support services for those experiencing mental health difficulties. There is also comprehensive welfare information and advice on the Centre’s section of the Students’ Union website at www.sussexstudent.com/advice.

The Centre employs professional Advisers and two of the elected full-time officers (the Education and Welfare Officers) are also based in the Centre. The Education Officer represents and advises students on academic issues (such as academic misconduct, appeals and complaints) and the Welfare Officer represents and advises students on non-academic University issues (such as disciplinary procedures and non-academic University complaints) and lobbies the University on welfare and equalities issues (such as provision for disabled students).

The Students’ Union also supports a society for disabled students, PAFA (Positive Action For All), email pafa@ussu.sussex.ac.uk
X. International & Study Abroad Office

The International & Study Abroad Office (ISAO) provides services to international students who are applying to Sussex and those already studying at the University, and also administers exchange programmes between Sussex and its partner institutions in the Americas, Asia and Europe. One of our principal tasks is to guide international students through the various challenges and new experiences that they may face, such as police registration, immigration issues, and using the health service. We run weekly immigration advice drop-in sessions as well as appointments where students can discuss any welfare or personal difficulties and may be referred on to other University support services.

The ISAO’s team includes part-time specialist advisors or country support officers for students from China, Japan and South Asia, in recognition of the fact that the philosophy and organisation of education in those countries is very different from that of the UK. They provide advice and guidance on a range of welfare or personal difficulties, as well as acting in a sign-posting role for other support services.

3. Disclosure of Information

Students who disclose a mental health difficulty, either upon application or subsequently, or who are referred for an assessment, will be invited to a meeting with the Mental Health Advisor. The Mental Health Advisor is located in the Student Support Unit which has strict ethical guidelines on confidentiality and complies with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. No information given by a student to the Student Support Unit (SSU) staff will be disclosed to any person outside the SSU unless it has been given permission by the student to do so or, in exceptional circumstances, such as a Health and Safety issue, as outlined in the University’s Code of Practice on Confidentiality [pdf] | word.

However, students are encouraged to disclose their needs at the earliest opportunity to ensure that appropriate support will be made available. These support needs are communicated by the SSU electronically, via Sussex Direct and access to this information is restricted to staff responsible for teaching the student and to the Student Advisor with responsibility for the relevant School. The purpose of the information is to ensure that appropriate staff are aware of the student’s support needs and can put in place any reasonable adjustments that have been recommended by the SSU.

The reasonable adjustments which would normally be recommended would include:

- Seating arrangements in class, e.g. near a door, at the front of the class, etc.
- Suggestions for seminar tutors regarding managing anxious students, e.g. avoiding direct questioning.
- Allowing recording devices in lectures.
- Note-takers for some students.
- A few students are accompanied by support workers in class.
- Alternative modes of assessment for presentations including exams.
- Extended deadlines for assignments.
• Sheltered accommodation or single rooms for exams.
• Use of a PC for exams.
• Extra time or rest breaks in exams and class tests.

In exceptional cases a formal request for alternative modes of assessment for exams, e.g. take-away papers (with or without a viva) or additional coursework.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of University Staff and Students

Responsibility for the wellbeing of students is defined in general by a 'duty of care' of the institution for the safety of students. The University should exercise its duty of care in respect of all students, including those with mental health difficulties and to the staff involved in supporting students. This involves ensuring that neither students nor staff are put at risk or required to provide pastoral care for which they have not been appropriately trained.

The University should provide necessary training and support to all relevant staff to enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

The University should ensure that all staff and students who have been affected by students' distress are supported, either through the line-management structure, or by referral to appropriate professional services.

5. The Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

All University staff should respond to students with mental health difficulties in a non-discriminatory, non-stigmatising and positive manner.

All staff involved in teaching must access and act upon the information provided in respect of individual students through Sussex Direct. If they are in any doubt about the implications of this information for their own practice, they must seek advice from the Mental Health Advisor.

All staff should be aware of their own personal and professional limitations. If they are concerned that a student has mental health problems and requires additional academic support they must refer the student to the Student Support Unit. If this proves difficult they should seek advice in confidence from the Mental Health Advisor, Psychological and Counselling Services or a Student Advisor in the Student Life Centre.

Under no circumstances should a member of staff accompany a student manifesting symptoms of serious disturbance off-campus, e.g. to the A & E department of the local hospital. If someone appears to be in immediate danger of seriously harming themselves or other people, staff should call Security on 3333

6. The Roles and Responsibilities of Students

Students need to take responsibility for communicating their needs and seeking support within the University as without this information there can be no offer of support.
Students are encouraged to take care of their own mental health, for example ensuring that they get adequate rest, take prescribed medication and access appropriate support, including support available through the Disabled Student's Allowance.

Students should be aware that any behaviour which impacts negatively on fellow students or staff, or is in any way disruptive or offensive, is not acceptable within the University community and will be subject to University procedures for the maintenance of good order.

Students concerned about a fellow student's mental well-being should be aware of their personal limitations; they should encourage their fellow student to seek specialist support at the earliest opportunity and, if this is difficult they themselves should seek advice in confidence from a Residential Adviser (RA) if they are living in University-managed accommodation, a Student Advisor in the Student Life Centre or staff in Psychological and Counselling Services (PCS). They can also contact the Mental Health Advisor (MHA) (see Appendix 1).

If someone appears to be in immediate danger of seriously harming themselves or other people, students should call Security on 3333 if on campus. If the situation arises off-campus, the police should be contacted directly.

7. Mental Health Liaison

A Mental Health Liaison team consisting of, as appropriate, the Director of Student Services, the MHA, the Director of PCS, a representative of the Student Life Centre, the Residential Services Student Support Manager and the relevant Academic Advisor and/or Director of Student Support will convene at short notice to consider acute situations where a student’s mental health or behaviour is giving cause for concern about the safety of themselves or others. The Director of PCS will convene a meeting to consider crisis management and referral issues on being alerted to the problem.

The MHLT will have the ability to make arrangements for a psychiatric assessment and/or a direct referral into secondary or tertiary care. The relevant GP, whether on campus or elsewhere) will be kept fully informed. The MHLT will track cases where there is NHT Trust involvement and liaise appropriately to prepare for the student’s discharge and assess the student’s fitness to return to their studies and/or student accommodation.

The MHLT will have a role in supporting the MHA with registered students who may experience acute episodes of ill-health requiring additional support or referral. PCS clients whose mental health deteriorates acutely may also need to be referred on via the MHLT.

Particular amendments will need to be made to cover confidentiality policies where joint working between PCS and the MHA is necessitated and where the student’s consent to the sharing of information cannot be sought or obtained.

The MHLT will consider making recommendations to the relevant DOSS once the acute situation is resolved.

8. University Procedures and Regulations Relevant to Students with Mental Health Problems
The University Ordinance in respect of Student Discipline states that "Students shall maintain a standard of conduct which is not harmful to the work, good order or good name of the University". This applies to all students and a diagnosis of mental illness will not automatically mitigate the imposition of penalties for breaches of discipline. However, it is recognised that certain behaviours may result from undiagnosed mental health difficulties in which case, whilst due penalty for any offence will be imposed, the student will also be referred to the relevant support services for assessment. This will enable on-going support to be put in place if appropriate.

In those cases where there is concern that the student is unfit to continue with their studies, or is exhibiting behaviour that is disruptive to the academic, social or business life of the University community, s/he may be required to temporarily withdraw from the University. A student living in University- managed accommodation who is not a fully registered student will be required to vacate the accommodation and could be subject to possession proceedings under the terms of the tenancy.

The Director of Psychological and Counselling Services (PCS) will arrange for an independent psychiatric assessment following a MHLT meeting in order to determine whether the student is fit to continue with their studies at the University or would benefit from a period of intermission. The psychiatrist's report, together with written reports from professional staff who have been directly involved with supporting the students, will be submitted to the student's Director of Student Support (DOSS) which can require the student to temporarily withdraw. The University may reasonably draw negative inferences if the student refuses to engage with the independent psychiatric assessment.

The DOSS will also determine the conditions for the student’s return, which will entail a meeting between the student, PCS and the Mental Health Advisor (MHA) and the submission of a psychiatric report attesting that the student is fit to return to the University. The arrangements for return may include specifying a series of periodic re-assessments and other contractual agreements as appropriate.

The student will have the right to appeal against a decision to require temporary withdrawal. Such an appeal will follow the normal University academic appeals procedure but the available grounds of appeal will be re-interpreted as:

- That there has been procedural irregularity or other inadequacy in the process by which the temporary withdrawal had been required.
- That there are materially relevant circumstances or evidence that those involved in making the decision to require temporary withdrawal were not aware of.
- That the decision to require temporary withdrawal was, overall, against the weight of evidence.

28 February 2007
Sue Yates
Head of Student Support

Revised September 2011
Melanie Withers
Director of Psychological and Counselling Services
CONTACTS

Mental Health Advisor: John Terrill
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Email: j.terrill@sussex.ac.uk

The Health Centre
Tel no: 249049
Email: admin.unimed@nhs.uk
http://www.unimed.co.uk/

Psychological & Counselling Services
Tel no: 01273 (67)8156
Email: counsellingreception@sussex.ac.uk
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/counselling

Student Life Centre
Tel no 01273 (87) 6767
Email Studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre

Student Support Unit
Tel no: 7466
Email: studentsupport@sussex.ac.uk
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sas/1-4-3-1.html

Sussex Regional Access Centre
Tel no: 8497
Email: srac@sussex.ac.uk
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/srac/

Residential Student Support Manager: Christopher Tucker
Tel no: 7250
Email: c.tucker@sussex.ac.uk

Chaplaincy
Tel no: 8217
Email: qnfa3@sussex.ac.uk
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/chaplaincy/

Student Advice and Representation Centre
Tel no: 7038
Email: advice@ussu.sussex.ac.uk
http://www.sussexstudent.com/advice