UCEM
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT

2021 - 2024

Mental health strategy

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1. Introduction

1 in 4 people will experience some form of mental health difficulty each year in England (Mind, 2020). With this in mind, and recognising that mental health and wellbeing affect all aspects of student life and study, UCEM has identified organisational health and in particular mental health as a key strategic priority. Studying at university is an exciting, rewarding, and transformational experience. It is an opportunity to build networks, achieve goals and develop career aspirations. At UCEM we aim to support students to achieve their goals whilst living satisfying, worthwhile and happy lives. We recognise that studying online can be difficult, and there will be times when students will struggle with the demands of balancing study with the demands of life. Staff within higher education institutions are reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety. UCEM recognises that staff wellbeing is important, for employee engagement and retention and in providing the best student experience.

At UCEM it is our priority to create one community of staff, students, and associates. We are working to ensure that everyone feels supported with their physical and mental wellbeing and is empowered to manage their own mental health. The UCEM Mental Health Strategy has been formulated with staff and students. It details existing initiatives to support wellbeing as well as identifying key areas for development.

2. Vision

UCEM will take a whole institution approach to develop one community that enables students of all levels along with staff to prioritise mental health and wellbeing. The UCEM community will be an open, supportive, healthy, and well-informed environment. It will work to tackle stigma, promote positive mental health, and provide appropriate, timely and easily accessible support to those who need it. There are five overarching strategic aims to achieve this vision.

3. Strategic Aims

To achieve the above vision UCEM has worked with staff and students to identify the following overarching aims:

1. Create a supportive whole university community that promotes positive mental health, and ensures mental health is a key strategic priority.

2. Ensure the UCEM community is informed and aware of the importance of good mental health, works to tackle stigma, and encourages open discussion around mental health.

3. Ensure appropriate and timely support is provided to those who need it.

4. Develop links with external services and stakeholders

5. Use data to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of mental health interventions and inform future strategic development.

3.1 To create a supportive whole university community that promotes positive mental health, and ensures mental health is a key strategic priority.

3.1.1 What we are doing now:

➜ UCEM has identified organisational health as key strategic goal. As part of this, good mental health is seen as a priority for all students and staff. A mental health strategy working group has been formed that regularly feeds back to the UCEM Senior Leadership Team to help determine new initiatives to support mental health and wellbeing.

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3. Strategic Aims

→ UCEM has four core values of: passion, integrity, excellence and support. These values are embedded through the recruitment process and during employment. These values are key in creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment.

→ We encourage all students with pre-existing mental health difficulties to contact us prior to commencing study, to discuss any specific support needs. Furthermore, support is available to any student in need throughout their studies.

→ Inclusivity and support are integral to UCEM policy. Equality impact assessments are carried out to ensure all students can access and benefit from UCEM policies. Policies such as the Antibullying and Harassment Procedure, and Safeguarding Procedure are used to create a supportive and safe community for all.

→ The Transform project has updated and improved the format of UCEM semesters and study. The project is designed to improve the student and staff experience. The changes, such as the removal of exams, should reduce stress and are expected to lead to improved levels of wellbeing.

→ UCEM aims to create a community of students and staff. Underrepresented groups have been identified as potentially having less positive experiences of study. As such, focus groups have been created to feedback and improve the student experience, for example the Supported and Disabled and BAME groups. Ambassadors have been appointed to represent such groups.

3. Strategic Aims

3.1.2 What we will be doing next:

➜ We will provide focussed support for students at times of change in their studies. This includes their transition into study, between academic years, and when leaving education. We will increase the amount of information available on wellbeing at student inductions, arrange check ins with students when results have been received, and liaise with known external partners to manage transitions post-graduation.

➜ We will work to further increase awareness of the broad range of support available through the Disability and Wellbeing, and Safeguarding Teams to students applying for their courses.

➜ We will enable students to 'opt in' to providing next of kin details to be contacted should there be any serious welfare concerns.

➜ We will develop student and staff volunteering opportunities.

➜ We will continue to grow UCEM Wellbeing Wednesday including staff wellbeing activities, guest speakers, and liaising with external partners

➜ We will increase staff awareness of mental health first aid and develop an easily accessible staff wellbeing area on the UCEM intranet

➜ We will facilitate more student social events and provide platforms for greater social interaction between students.

➜ We will allocate specific funding to ensure appropriate mental health training for staff and high quality awareness events can take place.

3. Strategic Aims

3.2 Ensure the UCEM Community is informed and aware of the importance of good mental health and works to tackle stigma

3.2.1 What we are doing now:

➜ We actively promote and participate in awareness events such a World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness week.

➜ We host events related to mental health and wellbeing, run by external speakers through charities such as Lionheart.

➜ We work to tackle stigma wherever it is found through the UCEM staff BAME Working Group, Mental Health First Aiders, and Student Ambassadors.

We encourage staff and students to share their own stories to increase awareness and tackle stigma.

➜ We provide appropriate training to staff in relation to mental health, including key staff being fully trained in mental health first aid.

➜ Staff awareness of wellbeing is at the centre of weekly bulletin updates, all staff meetings, and intranet posts.

➜ We provide a range of online resources on the VLE for students, and on the staff intranet to increase understanding and awareness of mental health.

➜ We have encouraged all staff and students to make a wellbeing pledge. This is a commitment to manage our own mental health and share ideas.

3. Strategic Aims

3.2.2 What we will be doing next:

➜ We will develop a wellbeing session for students prior to enrolling on their studies. This will cover techniques for how to manage wellbeing whilst studying online.

➜ We will increase the focus on support staff at both staff and student inductions through introduction videos.

➜ Mandatory health and safety training for new staff members is to be reviewed. As part of this we will strengthen the importance inclusion as well as of mental and physical health.

➜ We will introduce a system to flag students who are working with the Disability and Wellbeing Team. The UCEM Finance Team can then liaise with Disability and Wellbeing when following up missed payments.

➜ We will introduce a buddy system so staff are supported and can unload following difficult conversations, whilst also maintaining confidentiality.

➜ We will continue to meet the Well V2 building standards with the aim of increasing health and wellness within Horizons and any possible future teaching venues.

➜ We will continue to ensure online learning environments and teaching are inclusive and accessible, removing barriers, and sources of stress.

3.   Strategic Aims

3.3 Ensure appropriate and timely support is provided to those who need it

3.3.1 What we are doing now:

➜ We have dedicated teams to support students with whatever they may be going through. The Disability and Wellbeing Team, Safeguarding, Careers, Learning and Teaching Enhancement Team, and Apprenticeship Teams work together to ensure appropriate support is provided to those who need it. These teams are proactive in reaching out to students who may be at risk.

➜ We have robust Safeguarding procedures to support any student in crisis.

➜ We have implemented a Fitness to Study procedure.

➜ We recognise that finances are a major cause of stress and worry. We provide financial support to students through the Hardship Fund, Principles Discretionary Fund, and Redundancy Support Scheme.

➜ We have a team of fully trained mental health first aiders available to support students and staff.

➜ All UCEM staff have access to an employee assistance programme and all staff can speak to HR about personal or professional issues.

3. Strategic Aims

3.3.2 What we will be doing next:

➜ The UCEM community includes a wide range of different cultures that have differing views on mental health and wellbeing. We will work to address any cultural barriers to accessing support.

➜ We will provide further mental health awareness training for line managers and staff in student facing roles.

➜ We will develop a flagging system for students who have suspended their studies for wellbeing reasons. This will help to identify students who may need further support from UCEM.

➜ We will increase the visibility of the Disability and Wellbeing Team for students who are applying for mitigating circumstances and may need assistance with the process, or ongoing support.

➜ We will make information on support services more front facing on the VLE and staff intranet with less click throughs required to access information.

➜ We will aim to increase interaction with the UCEM staff social network with the introduction of a positive wellbeing area.

➜ We will use data on extensions to provided targeted information, advice, and guidance to students who may need support.

3. Strategic Aims

3.4 To develop links with external support services and stakeholders

3.4.1 What we are doing now:

➜ We have an ongoing partnership with the RICS charity Lionheart. As part of this partnership they provide webinars and training sessions on how students and staff can manage different aspects of their own wellbeing.

➜ We are an associate of the charity London Nightline. This is a confidential listening service available to all UCEM students between the hours of 6pm and 8am UK time. All Nightline volunteers are students themselves and UCEM students are able to apply to become volunteers.

➜ We provide all UCEM staff with access to an Employee Assistance Program which provides online CBT, medical advice, bereavement support, legal advice and life support.

3.4.2 What we will be doing next

➜ We will aim to build a greater understanding with employers, so they are aware of the support services at UCEM and UCEM have increased awareness of the support available through employers.

➜ We will increase knowledge and awareness of local support services in Hong Kong.

➜ We will create a directory of international support services that students can be signposted to when necessary.

➜ We will arrange for external speakers and groups to give regular talks and presentations on mental health and wellbeing

3. Strategic Aims

→ We will continue to build links with external support services to ensure appropriate support is available to the diverse UCEM community.

3.5 To use data to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of mental health interventions and inform future strategic development

3.5.1 What we are doing now:

→ We continually monitor and report on the number of registered students disclosing a mental health condition.

→ An Annual Disability and Wellbeing Report analyses data on the retention and success of students with diagnosed disabilities and health conditions.

→ We carry out staff pulse surveys to maintain senior leadership awareness of staff wellbeing and ensure that feedback is acted on.

→ We conduct regular employee engagement surveys to ensure staff feedback is collected.

3.5.2 What we will be doing next

→ We will look to broaden and develop data analysis on student retention and success when a mental health difficulty has been disclosed.

→ We will use data to identify specific groups that may be at risk and encourage them to engage with support services.

→ We will further develop our analysis of staff retention trends to identify any key factors in staff turnover

→ We will use anecdotal evidence and student/staff feedback to plan future events and webinars

4. Action Plan

A number of key initiatives have been laid out in this strategy. The Mental Health Strategy Working group will continue to meet regularly as we take it forward. We will closely monitor the progress of each aim to ensure it is being delivered and having the desired impact on student and staff wellbeing as well as to develop any new initiatives if required. The working group will feedback progress to the UCEM Senior Leadership Team and encourages any feedback from students to be sent to the **Disability and Wellbeing Team.**

UCEM Staff are encouraged to send any feedback or ideas to the HR inbox.

We will work with Student ambassadors to ensure there is a student voice and input in the mental health strategy.

We aim to have implemented all recommended developments by September 2024. At which point we will set new targets to develop UCEM's commitment to mental health further.

5. How to access support

If you are a student and you are concerned about your wellbeing you can contact the disability and wellbeing team or Safeguarding Team to arrange a call to talk through support:

Safeguarding team

o 0118 467 2400

o **Safeguarding@ucem.ac.uk**

Disability and wellbeing

o 0118 921 4696

o **Wellbeing@ucem.ac.uk**

Staff are encouraged to discuss wellbeing concerns with their line manager or to email the HR Team. Further information on the support available through **UCEM Mental Health First Aiders** can be found in the Wellbeing section on the staff intranet, as can information on the **Employee Assistance Programme**.

Any staff who wish to contact the employee assistance programme can phone Health Assured directly on 0800 030 5182.

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