Sheffield Hallam University

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Section A - Policy

1 Policy Statement

Sheffield Hallam University aims to provide the necessary environment to enable students from all backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics, to realise their academic potential and engage fully in their learning. Essential to this is the provision of clear information for both staff and students in relation to services and support.

The University's Student Support Framework[1] articulates the University's commitment to providing a supportive student experience with consideration of all aspects of the student lifecycle not only the direct teaching environment. Focus on the latter in isolation, risks ignoring factors that may well have a detrimental impact on a student's ability to engage with their studies as well as on their overall experience of the University.

The University is committed to ensuring a non-discriminatory, de-stigmatising and supportive environment for students with mental health difficulties. Students will be empowered to engage fully in all activities, to utilise support as required and to make informed decisions about their future. A more diverse student population enhances the experience of the whole institution, so contributing to a healthier university.

2 Context and legal framework

2.1 Background

Many people experience some kind of mental health difficulty during their lives. Mental health difficulties vary greatly in relation to severity of symptoms and impact on ability to function. Difficulties range from short-term depression and anxiety, eating disorders and self-harm to longer-term psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia and bi-polar affective disorder. This policy and procedure applies to students experiencing any difficulties with their mental health. There are some procedures which are specific to students who are regarded as having a disability under the Equality Act definition but many of the principles covered apply equally to students who do not have a diagnosis. The document aims to outline sources of support and guidance and to identify relevant procedures at different stages of a student's lifecycle.

To understand the scope of this policy and procedure it is worth noting the number of students likely to be affected by a mental health difficulty in any given year. Statistics show that 1 in 4 people will experience a diagnosable mental health problem in any one year (Office for National

[1] The Student Support Framework documents can be found at https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/quality/academic-policies-regulations-and-frameworks/

Statistics 2001)[2] and it is therefore realistic to expect a similar incidence amongst the student population. A study of students in UK Higher Education institutions by Bewick et al (2008)[3] indicated that up to 28% of students describe symptoms associated with psychological distress.

It is also helpful to consider the possible patterns of incidence across the student lifecycle to enable university staff to take a more proactive approach in supporting students and look at factors which may be within the University's influence to change or control. Ann Macaskill's research at Sheffield Hallam (2013) found that the incidence of psychiatric caseness, i.e. illness symptoms sufficiently serious to require professional treatment, was 23.1% for students sampled in the middle of year 2. This compared to an incidence of 12.9% in the sample population on admission. The incidence of caseness remained high in year 3 but came down slightly to 18.6%. The commonest condition was anxiety (97.1%) followed by depression (46.4%). Only 5.3% of the sample population were receiving treatment for their psychological problems. Overall the incidence of psychological distress was equivalent to that of the general population[4].

2.2 Life at University

There may be numerous reasons why students experience mental health difficulties whilst studying at University. University life can be associated with concerns about debt and finance and increased pressure to achieve a high class degree. This is currently in the context of a difficult economic climate with reduced opportunities for future employment. Students may be living away from home and from the support of friends and family, often for the first time whilst also adjusting to a new environment and increased independence or they may be dealing with the effects of a previous traumatic experience. A considerable number of students experiment with illegal substances and increase their levels of alcohol use when they move to University. All of the above factors add to an individual's chances of experiencing psychological distress. In addition, ages 16-25 are associated with the high risk period for the first episode of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, although these disorders are relatively rare compared to other mental health difficulties.

Many of the personal problems that students experience can be resolved quickly through contact with the student's personal support network, especially friends and family or by talking to tutors or other advisors. However a number of students will develop emotional or psychological problems that are more persistent and which affect their ability to progress their academic studies and/or engage with others. Some students will come to University with a pre-existing condition, which they may or may not disclose.

2.3 Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998

Some students will be covered by the definition of disability in respect of their mental health difficulties. Disability is defined as a physical or mental

[2] http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics/uk-worldwide/

[3] Bewick,B.M., Gill,J.& Mulhern,B. (2008) Using electronic surveying to assess psychological distress within the UK university student population:a multi-site pilot investigation.E-Journal of Applied Psychology,**4**,1-5

[4] Macaskill, A. (2013) The Mental Health of University Students in the United Kingdom. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 41 (4), 426-441.*

impairment, which has a "substantial and long-term" (12 months or more) "adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". This includes memory and ability to learn, concentrate and understand; and perception of the risk of physical danger. It will therefore include students with long-term illnesses such as schizophrenia. Other mental health difficulties are also likely to be covered including fluctuating conditions, where a substantial adverse effect ceases but is likely to recur.

Under the Equality Act, institutions are required to treat people with disabilities no less favourably than others, in relation to admissions, education and support and where necessary, to make reasonable adjustments where disabled people are placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled people. This duty to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory, meaning that the University should not wait until being approached by a disabled student before considering how to meet the duty. The learning environment should be as inclusive as possible so that individual interventions are the exception, not the rule.[5]

As an organisation Sheffield Hallam University takes account of the principles of the Human Rights Act (1998) and aims to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of students and staff.

Section B - Advice, Support and Procedures

3 Disclosure

The University is committed to tackling the discrimination and stigma that is associated with mental health difficulties and encourages an environment in which students feel safe to disclose. Currently rates of disclosure remain low - in 2009/2010 only 0.53% of first year undergraduate students who declared a disability defined this as a mental health problem (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2011)[6]. The number of students disclosing a mental health difficulty at SHU during the academic year 2016/17 was 1032, which is 3% of the student population [7]

Students are invited to disclose their mental health difficulties at any point during the student life cycle. This is encouraged especially at pre and post-admission stages, so that the University can meet the student's needs at the earliest possible opportunity.

When a student wishes to make a disclosure, the member of staff concerned would discuss with the student who else should be informed, what they should be told and who should pass on that information.[8] Any information that is shared should be done on a need to know basis.

In circumstances where a student discloses a mental health difficulty which is long term and where it is possible that the student may meet the definition of a

[5] DIS 2015/15 DSA Draft Guidance
[6] Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011) http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1897/239/
[7] Cognos Report SHU 2016/17
[8] https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/equality_and_diversity/ConfidentialityRelatingToDisabilityAndHealth.html

disability as described in 2.3 the student should be signposted to Disabled Student Support (see section 5.3.2 reasonable adjustments).

Further information about disclosure is provided in the sections below.

4 Pre-admission and admission

Course providers will aim to ensure that prospective students receive clear information about the content of the course, required learning outcomes and methods of assessment, to enable applicants to make well informed choices.

The University welcomes students with disabilities and needs to know their requirements so that it can make the appropriate arrangements for support. Opportunities are provided for applicants to disclose pre-existing mental health difficulties before they apply, at University Open Days, during the application process and after they have been offered a place, at Course Information Days, so that support requirements can be discussed. Application and booking forms should all include the opportunity to disclose and for the applicant to provide information about any support required during the recruitment process.

The University is committed to applying Admissions Criteria that are objective and fair. When applicants disclose a disability via UCAS or Direct Admission application, they are sent information about the support that can be made available for them and encouraged to register themselves for support, which would result in them being followed up by the Disabled Student Support Team. Students also receive information about the Disabled Student Support Team within their 'Offer of a Place' and 'Welcome' letters.

Students are strongly recommended to disclose issues to the University as soon as they become aware of them, which is particularly important for courses leading to a professional qualification, and applicants are advised to contact the Faculty Student Support Officer directly to find out whether they are required to provide any additional information about their disability.

5 Information, guidance and support

The principles and model of student support adopted by the University are outlined in the University's Student Support Framework[9]. One of the principles included in the framework is 'belonging' with course teams providing activities which encourage and enable students to develop a sense of community on their course. This means that students may look for support from their peers and tutors within their course community.

The International Experience Team also play a particularly important part in this process as they assist international students who have moved from other countries, often with a different cultural context to develop a sense of belonging through advice, activities and the facilitation of contact with other international and UK students. The University promotes a range of activities through the Sheffield Hallam Students' Union 'Your Guide' to encourage students to connect with one another.

[9] The Student Support Framework documents can be found at https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/quality/academic-policies-regulations-and-frameworks/

5.1 Induction

During face to face University inductions, students will be made aware of the range of support that is available within the institution, including support for students with disabilities. Students who have disclosed a disability will receive an email advising them of drop-ins with the Disabled Student Support Service. Information about drop-ins and support will also be made available via screens, leaflets, shuspace and through Faculty Student Support Officers.

5.2 Fitness to Practise

Courses that lead to professional registration in social work, teaching, childcare, nursing and professions allied to medicine have additional professional requirements, with students needing to demonstrate that they are 'fit to practise'. Each professional qualification has its own requirements for being deemed 'fit', which are set by the statutory body responsible for that profession. For full information on these procedures see the University Fitness to Practise Regulations[10]. Where a student discloses to the University a mental health problem that may have implications for fitness to practise, the University will take advice from an independent occupational health practitioner and consider if there are reasonable adjustments that would make the course more accessible and maintain safe working. This process intends to enable students to manage the demands of their course and their health condition where possible. Where a student's academic performance or professional practise is being compromised by the impact of their mental health difficulties, the concern will be referred to the relevant Faculty for consideration under the Fitness to Practise Regulations. If a student does not disclose a relevant health condition, the University and placement providers may not be able to make adjustments and provide support when considering fitness to practise.

5.3 During the course

The University recognises that students may develop mental health difficulties during the course of their studies and many conditions such as depression fluctuate, with varying impact on the student's ability to study and function at University.

5.3.1 Liaison between Faculties and centrally provided Student Services

The University provides services to support students who experience difficulties, emergencies or crises during their studies. In the first instance this contact is likely to be with a member of academic staff or a member of Faculty support staff. Students with difficulties will initially be directed towards the Faculty Helpdesk or Student Support Officer. Faculty staff may at times be required to liaise with staff in Student Services for specialist advice and support e.g. Student Wellbeing or Disabled Student Support.

If a student discloses that s/he has a mental health difficulty and could be eligible for support via a Learning Contract or for personal support, this being identified either by the student or by Faculty staff, (or if it is the Faculty staff member's view that the student might benefit from this) the student will be referred or signposted to the appropriate team within Student Services (details of roles and responsibilities and the referral process are attached in Appendix 3).

[10] https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/fitness_to_practise/index.html

If a student discloses issues about her/his mental health difficulty to a member of Faculty staff which are distressing, but s/he is not willing to be referred for further support or to get help elsewhere, the University will not be able to provide support and adjustments that would help the student to complete the course. The member of staff will make a confidential record of the discussion, which will be held by the Faculty and may wish to get support for him/herself in such a situation, which would be provided via the Duty member of staff within Student Wellbeing.

5.3.2 Reasonable adjustments

The University has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for all disabled students. The definition of a disability in the context of students with mental health difficulties is outlined in section 2.3.

Alternative arrangements (reasonable adjustments) can be made for students with mental health difficulties whose ability to undertake examinations or particular forms of assessment or learning could be adversely affected by their condition. Students will be required to provide medical evidence in order for support to be put in place. Support will consist of a Learning Contract and/or funded support.

Reasonable adjustments outlined in a Learning Contract may include:

- Special arrangements for sitting exams
- Extensions to coursework deadlines
- More flexible application of assessment requirements, where a student's health condition means the particular requirements pose an obstacle and the adjustment does not compromise assessment of core competencies
- Support to enable students to access their placement

It is the responsibility of academic staff to read the Learning Contract and for them or the Student Support Officer to discuss its implementation with the student. Staff can access a report listing students who have been recommended alternative forms of assessment via the University Reporting link by following Students - Specialist reporting - Disability reports. This enables Course Leaders and Module Leaders to consider alternative assessment instruments at the earliest opportunity.

Some funding for learning support i.e. equipment and support workers is provided through Disabled Students Allowance, once students have attended a Study Needs Assessment. These assessments can be carried out at the Sheffield Regional Assessment Centre or at any other National Assessment Centre and can take place at any time during a student's course (refer to appendix for contact details).

5.3.3 Support on placement

The support arrangements for disabled students on placement varies across the institution and typically involves a range of Faculty staff liaising with the placement provider. For students who have disclosed any sort of disability, including a mental health difficulty to the University, this information cannot be passed onto the placement employer without the student's consent. It should however be made clear to the student that a successful placement is largely dependent upon willingness to disclose in enough time to allow reasonable

adjustments to be put in place. The student would then be allocated a specific placement supervisor or mentor with whom to discuss any issues that arise in relation to the placement. Students who cannot meet the demands of the placement setting, even with reasonable adjustments in place would be offered support and advice to enable them to transfer to a suitable alternative programme of study if there is one available.

5.3.4 Helping students in crisis

Where there is concern that a student is at risk of harming him/herself or others, or is vulnerable to harm from others, the matter should be referred to a senior Executive member of staff in the Faculty or Directorate where the matter has been raised. A judgement will need to be made as to the seriousness and urgency of the situation and the action required. This may need to be done in consultation with other members of staff such as the Duty member of staff within Student Wellbeing.

Where there is a clear indication that the student poses an imminent risk to self or others, the student should be signposted or supported to consult his or her GP, at the earliest opportunity and if necessary, emergency services should be called.

Where the crisis involves an international student, an International Student Advisor in Student Services should be involved as there may be implications for the student's visa status and other matters that require expert advice.

The 'Supporting Students in Distress Guide' gives guidance on initial steps that can be taken in relation to a range of crisis situations[11].

5.3.5 Liaison with external services

Referral to and liaison with external mental health services should always be carried out by a Mental Health Advisor located within Student Wellbeing as these members of staff have recognised mental health qualifications and relevant experience.

5.4 On exit

It is important that students with mental health difficulties are given opportunities to access advice when considering their options at the end of their course, especially where their achievement has been adversely affected by their difficulties. Careers Advisers in the Careers and Employment Service can help students to be realistic about the impact of their difficulties and about how to market themselves effectively to future employers. They can also provide advice about appropriate disclosure and requesting of references. University staff can look at guidance on providing references for students.[12]

6 Confidentiality and record keeping

Students are owed a duty of confidentiality under common law. Confidentiality encourages students to have the confidence and trust to seek appropriate help. Where information is recorded or shared, the terminology used should be

[11] https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/shudistress/

[12] https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/personal_information/providing_references_for_students.pdf

objective and made available to the student and reflect educational needs as opposed to diagnosis.

All information relating to the mental health of the student must be kept confidential unless:

- The student consents to sharing information
- Disclosure can be justified in the overriding public interest, which includes prevention of serious harm (e.g. informing a student's GP where a student is considered a suicide risk) or prevention/detection of serious crime
- a court has ordered disclosure or it is required for legal proceedings
- there is a contract or agreement in place for sharing data between the University and another organisation

The University takes care to prevent accidental or unauthorised disclosure of students' sensitive and confidential personal information. Where staff believe that it is justified to disclose confidential information without the student's consent, staff are required to comply with the University's policies on holding personal data[13]. The University would normally inform the student of the decision to disclose, unless to do so would itself risk further harm. Disclosure of information relating to the mental health of students with external agencies should always be done via a Student Wellbeing Advisor or if by other University staff, in consultation with a member of the University Secretariat.

7 Break in Study

A student may wish to consider applying for a Break in Study due to the impact of mental health difficulties, or if study is considered to be having a detrimental effect on the student's health/wellbeing or on that of fellow students and/or staff. This may be negotiated between the student and the University with the student spending a specified period of time away from their studies and resuming them on an agreed date. For full information on these procedures see the University's Extenuation Policy [14].

The break in study will allow for a period of recovery and will enable the student to receive the recommended support and input. The student should be advised of any implications for changes to course structure during their period of absence. Where courses or modules are made unavailable due to course restructure, the University would aim to offer acceptable alternatives. It is also essential that the student seeks advice regarding the implications of suspending their studies on loans, entitlement to benefits, receipt of Disabled Students Allowances (DSA), visa requirements etc. from the relevant advice services and funding bodies.

Students returning to study following a period of illness, whether in hospital or in the community, should be encouraged to meet with a Mental Health Advisor from Student Wellbeing. The Advisor would liaise with external mental health services as well as communicating with the Faculty and internal support departments including Disabled Student Support to ensure that the appropriate support and reasonable adjustments are put in place for the student's return. Once the student is satisfied that they are ready to continue with their studies, they would be advised of the relevant process.

[13] https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/personal_information/index.html
[14] https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/illness/index.html

8 Disciplinary issues

All students are subject to University Regulations and are expected to adhere to certain standards of behaviour. The University has disciplinary regulations in place to deal with those students whose behaviour does not meet these standards. However it is recognised that such behaviour may relate to a student's health and wellbeing and so it may not be appropriate to apply disciplinary regulations. In these circumstances, the relevant Annex of the Disciplinary Regulations for Students[15] should be applied. This would enable assessment of the impact that mental health difficulties are having on the student's behaviour and recommendations in response to this. A possible outcome is a recommendation that the student takes a certain period of time away from their studies or that they withdraw from their course of study. A date would be agreed for review of the student's wellbeing, with consideration of the extent to which any concerns have been addressed.

9 Staff training and support

All University staff will receive information about the Equality Act and its implementation as well as what constitutes discrimination, during their University Induction. They will also be expected to complete an on-line module on the Equality Act, working with students with disabilities and other protected characteristics and challenging stigma. Human Resources offer a course on Mental Health Awareness which is suitable for all staff and in addition, Mental Health First Aid courses are available for staff who are likely to have contact with students with mental health difficulties on a regular basis.

Accommodation staff (including volunteers) and Mentors and Study Skills Tutors will receive specific training from the Mental Health Advisors, due to the nature and extent of contact they have with students who have mental health difficulties.

All staff within the University have the option to contact either the 'Duty Advisor' or a Mental Health Advisor from Student Wellbeing should they have concerns about or require advice in relation to students with mental health difficulties.

Approved by Academic Board, December 2014 (AB Minute 14/80 refers)

Amendments since Approval:	**Detail of Revision:**	**Date of Revision:**	**Revision Approved by:**
	1.1	14 July 2017	Head of Student Support Services

[15] https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/conduct_discipline/index.html

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Related policies/procedures:
Fitness to Practise Procedure
Disciplinary Regulations for Students – Annexe C
Supporting Students in Distress – A Guide for Staff

Appendix 2

Additional resources

- Guidelines on student mental health policies and procedures for higher education CVCP
- Student Mental Health Planning, Guidance and Training Manual HEFCE funded project
  http://www.studentmentalhealth.org.uk/
- Mental health of students in higher education
- Royal College of Psychiatrists – College Report CR166
  http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/publications/collegereports/cr/cr166.aspx
- Supporting students in distress, a guide for staff
  https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/shudistress/

Appendix 3

Where to go for help and support

Disabled Student Support

Provide support for students with a recognised disability or long term medical condition. Advisors can help students to set up a Learning Contract, which outlines recommendations for 'reasonable adjustments'. Staff can also guide students through the process of applying for Disabled Students Allowance.

Phone 0114 225 3813
Email disability-support@shu.ac.uk

Faculty Student Services Team

All students are assigned a Student Support Officer. This member of staff provides advice on Extenuating Circumstances and meeting deadlines. They also support students who are dealing with difficult personal circumstances that may be affecting their studies.

Faculty Helpdesk contact details:

ACES	
Cantor Building	0114 225 6777
Sheaf Building	0114 225 3409
SBS	
SHIP	0114 225 2882
Health & Wellbeing	
Robert Winston Building	0114 225 5564
Development & Society	
Arundel Building	0144 225 3636
Level 11, Owen Building	0114 225 3113
Level 4, Owen Building	0114 225 4267
Level 1, Heart of Campus Building	0114 225 2543

International Experience Team

Offer support to international students from pre-arrival to graduation. A specialist visa advice service and help with visa extensions is available. The team also advise in relation to the hardship fund.
Phone 0114 225 3813
Email internationalsupport@shu.ac.uk

MIND: offers advice, support and services to anyone with a mental health problem as well as challenging discrimination and stigma.
Phone 0300 123 3393/0114 258 4489
Website www.mind.org.uk www.sheffieldmind.co.uk

NHS 111: available 24 hours per day for 365 days a year. For urgent medical help or advice when the situation is not life threatening.
Phone 111 from mobiles or landlines
Website www.nhs.uk/111/

Samaritans: a 24 hour support service to discuss personal issues.
Phone 116 123/0114 276 7277
Website http://www.samaritans.org/

Sheffield Regional Assessment Centre: undertakes needs assessments for disabled learners who have applied for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) through their funding body. DSA is a non-means tested allowance that covers any additional costs incurred by students because of their disability.
Phone 0114 225 3623
Email assessment-centre@shu.ac.uk

Student Funding and Access Support: offers help and advice on a range of financial support issues to current and prospective students. Also administers grants.
Phone 0114 225 3813
Email transitions@shu.ac.uk

Student Health at SHU: provides a full range of medical services to students. Doctors and nurses offer drop-ins and appointments.
Phone 0114 225 2134
Website www.studenthealthatshu.co.uk

Student Nightline: out-of-hours listening service delivered by student volunteers. Term time only, 8pm - 8am.
Phone 0114 222 8787

Student Union Advice Centre: a team of professionally trained and experienced advisors, independent of the University, who offer free, confidential and independent advice.
Phone 08000 732002 or 0114 225 4148
Website www.hallamstudentsunion.com

Student Wellbeing Service: a confidential service providing personal support and guidance through counselling, mental health support, healthy living resources and spirituality and faith advice.

Mental Health Practitioners coordinate support for students with mental health difficulties, working with agencies within and outside of the University as required.

The Duty Practitioner is a member of the Student Wellbeing Service who is available Monday to Friday during working hours to offer advice and consultation to staff in relation to student issues.

Phone 0114 225 2136
Email student.wellbeing@shu.ac.uk