

UCL Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021

Action plan for Objective 4 (June 2019)

Strategic vision

Enhance our inclusive, caring and supportive community by positively promoting good health and wellbeing (social, physical and mental) as the foundation for academic success and a great student experience.

Main objectives

1. Establish a whole-university approach to student health and wellbeing.
2. Support students in their integration into life at UCL.
3. Develop resources to encourage personal awareness of health and wellbeing and facilitate peer support.
4. Establish effective links between UCL, the NHS and other services to deliver integrated mental health care and improved risk management.
5. Ensure support for disabled students or those affected by health and wellbeing difficulties is personalised and the adjustments are effective.
6. Align student and staff wellbeing policies and initiatives to foster an inclusive and supportive community.

Introduction and context

Wellbeing does not mean an absence of physical or mental illness. Rather it is a state of physical, mental and emotional health where a student is able to engage meaningfully in learning and contribute to their community. Wellbeing is personal and multifactorial, but typically includes feelings of being socially connected, a sense of direction and belonging, satisfaction with personal achievements, and low levels of anxiety.

This strategy sets out to embed a whole-university approach to health and wellbeing so that students can reach their full potential, be successful and enjoy their time at UCL.

The strategy has been developed and will be delivered in partnership with Students' Union UCL. It recognises the positive impact of inclusive and welcoming communities on student wellbeing and commits to making sure that all students thrive at UCL. There should be no stigma in disclosing disability and health/mental health difficulties. A new clinical pathway for students affected by mental health difficulties will provide more students with evidence-based treatment, in a timelier manner than is currently the case.

There are numerous dependencies between staff and students. The strategy sets out to align approaches to staff and students' health and wellbeing in order to bring about cultural change and lasting improvements.

The strategy reflects UCL's context and mission described in UCL 2034. UCL students come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring a diversity of prior experiences to our community. In 2018/19, there are around 42,000 students enrolled on programmes of study and research at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research levels across 11 faculties. Whilst UCL has more postgraduates than undergraduate students, some undergraduate programmes attract students as young as 16 years old. Around forty per cent of UCL students are international. UCL's location, in central London, further contributes to the richness of the student experience.

In 2018, UK government policy shifted towards an explicit expectation that universities will make student health and wellbeing a strategic priority. A former universities minister, Sam Gyimah, expressed that it is no longer acceptable for universities solely to see their responsibility as the training of the mind but that they also need to work to adopt a sense of real importance of wellbeing across the institution. As such, external developments inform the strategy, too.

The six main objectives of the strategy set out UCL's approach to student health and wellbeing over the period 2019-2021. Each objective is achieved by a group of actions to be set in motion immediately and be fully embedded by 2021.

The strategy will be refreshed in 2021 alongside the UCL Education Strategy and the Research Strategy.

Action plan

Objective 4 - Establish close collaborative links between UCL, the NHS and other services to deliver integrated mental health care and improved risk management

The development of closer links between UCL, the NHS and other specialist services to provide better co-ordination to student support and improved risk management is one of the recommendations of Universities UK's 'Step Change' programme. The programme, which is also reinforced by government policy, encourages universities to reconfigure themselves as health-promoting and supportive environments.

In this respect, UCL offers an innovative proposition: trialling a transition from a support to a clinical care model for students experiencing mental health difficulties. UCL researchers and therapists from SSW's Student Psychological and Counselling Services will develop and implement an integrated pathway, a stepped-care clinical model. The integrated pathway ensures more students receive evidence-based treatment in line with their needs and that they do so more quickly than is currently the case. The new approach is strongly supported by UCL's senior leadership.

Leads:

- Barry Keane – UCL
 - Simon To – SUUCL
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- a) Involve expertise from across the UCL academic community, in particular within the Faculty of Brain Sciences, to inform and shape UCL's approach to supporting and improving the mental health and wellbeing of students.
 - b) Adopt a new integrated care pathway to expand the range of therapeutic treatments at UCL. The model reflects the diverse treatment needs of the student population. It will be delivered jointly by Student Support and Wellbeing, Occupational Health and the Faculty of Brain Sciences at UCL, and NHS agencies.
 - c) Improve access to mental health care for all students and deliver treatment which is not easily accessible within the NHS; for instance, treatment for self-harm, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, and alcohol and substance misuse.
 - d) Take proactive steps towards a 'suicide-safer' campus and develop a cohesive approach to student suicide prevention, response and postvention. Create an environment that encourages and provides opportunities for anyone affected by suicide to speak openly.

- e) Ensure improved risk management by providing holistic and co-ordinated care to students identified as being at risk of suicide.
- f) Provide appropriate and timely communications and offer support to those affected in the event of a student suicide.

Priorities for the 2019-20 academic year:

- Implementing Step 1 and 2 of the Step Care Model
- To achieve the above:
 - Suitable premises need to be identified for the delivery of Step 1 and 2
 - Appropriate referral pathways between UCL and the NHS need to be developed
 - A legal contract between UCL and the NHS needs to be developed
 - Governance issues such as accountability, supervision, confidentiality, triaging, data sharing, etc., need establishing.
- Further de-stigmatisation of mental health across UCL
- Contribute to the development of a UCL community that provides the opportunity to talk openly about suicide
- Contribute to the support of those at UCL affected by a student's suicide
- Developing further SSW partnerships with the NHS and other agencies
- The induction of three new Term Time Only clinicians for SPCS
- The acquirement of further space in 3-4 Taviton Street to house the above new clinicians for SPCS
- A review of SPCS's website
- A review of SPCS's publicity materials

