UCL Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021

Action plan for Objective 5 (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 5 - Ensure support for disabled students or those affected by health and wellbeing difficulties is personalised and the adjustments are effective

Some students need additional support to reach their full potential and thrive at UCL. Student Support and Wellbeing deliver student-led, personalised and timely adjustments to the learning and living environments to best meet student needs and access requirements.

Leads:

- Natalie Humphrey – UCL
- Sinead Booth – SUUCL

a) Make sure that disabled students can thrive at UCL. Emphasise a caring community where there is no stigma to disclosing disability and health/wellbeing difficulties. Meet disclosures with consistent and timely support.

- Establish consistent training and approach to disability, Social Model of Disability, that can be accessed and understood by staff and clubs and societies. This model will also enable and promote an understood and shared health and wellbeing literacy amongst staff and students.

- Establish Social Model of Disability Training that can be accessed through Arena and a standard session that can be delivered to identified key groups, such as Society Presidents, Careers Service and Exam Invigilators

- Review the UCL website, in particular the SSW pages and ensure a consistent use of terminology and language that eliminates deficit and medical model language

a) Deliver excellent student support to all those who are in contact with Student Support and Wellbeing services. Offer a sensitive, personalised and empowering approach to student support. Maintain integrity to foster a culture of trust and willingness to engage.

- Using a Coaching Approach to our student interactions wherever possible and ensuring that all student facing staff are trained and confident in adapting their style to respond to student need.

- All SSW DMHW Staff to receive Coaching Training as part of their probation

- All SSW DMHW Staff to receive Mental Health First Aid Training as part of their probation

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- All SSW wider staff to receive Mental Health First Aid Training

- Develop clear messaging that is understood by staff and students on how to access support and from where

b) Continue to embed an inclusive learning and living environment for all, thereby reducing the number of individual adjustments required.

- Through the SSW Community of Practice a toolkit will be created to promote wellbeing within departments through inclusive practices

- UCL East are designing an inclusive curriculum checklist that we can incorporate alongside the wellbeing checklist (using the principles of Universal Design for Learning)

- Working with ISD to roll out the programme and review of Digital Accessibility in line with EU changes to regulations

- Review UCL accommodation and clarity of information available at application in regards to accessibility of room and location

c) Offer a personalised approach to student health and wellbeing support by making available a range of interventions to meet individual needs. Interventions include (but are not limited to): awareness-raising and prevention; information, signposting and advice; reasonable adjustments; mental health mentoring; personal tutoring; and external referrals.

- Working with other services within UCL to have effective and monitored referrals, which can be better managed using SID.

- Regular meetings between teams to ensure communication lines are open

- Deliver study skills workshops to increase our preventative strategy options, to be led by our Study Skills tutors.

- Utilising the space that we have in the Student Centre to advertise our partner organisations and encourage usage amongst students

- Increase the number of students accessing the support recommended to them through their funding agencies, such as Mental Health Mentoring and Specialist Study Skills Support

- Termly reviews and data capture for services offered within SSW DMHW

d) Effect service efficiency and provide clear, quick and appropriate follow-ups to student appointments and further referrals. Offer dedicated support to students taking or returning from interruption of study and those considering leaving UCL due to health and wellbeing reasons.

- Develop and implement Service Level Agreements and Key Performance Indicators for responding to students who access the service. To continue to monitor and improve our Return to Study process.

- Develop SLAs and KPIs for our key processes: Drop-in, Appointment, Applicant Support Questionnaire, Request for mentoring or study skills, return to study, student of concern, requesting a SoRA

- Implement 'What to Expect..' information for students who are considering or booked in to attend an appointment within SSW DMHW – as we know many students do not know why they are coming to meet with us or how to prepare causing delays

- Through the work with the Interruption to Study Working Group it has been agreed that students will have a meeting prior to interrupting or withdrawing from study with a departmental member of staff – through this new model we can promote an option that students thinking of withdrawing are offered a coaching session to explore their decision before submitting paperwork.

- Implement an optional programme of Keeping In Touch Days for students who take an interruption to encourage a meaningful return

e) Expand the network of partner and affiliated external organisations. Offer effective signposting and direct referrals to specialist support for a range of issues, such as domestic and sexual violence and dedicated LGBT+ support.

- Identify the areas of support that are required and reach out to local organisations, wherever possible agreeing referral pathways and communication and data capture strategies.

- Review current organisations we are working with and review current working relationship

- Reach out to new organisations and those we have identified in needing and set up any relevant agreements and timeframes

- Liaise with other local universities and identify any work they are doing with local organisations that UCL should consider

- Promote our partner work so students are aware that these are possible referrals that they can access

f) Continue to integrate the student support provision in UCL's student residences into the Student Support and Wellbeing department's activities. This ensures consistent and co-ordinated specialist support for students in both their learning and living environments.

- Build upon the communication and working relationship with the residency teams and work with them to identify areas that need improving, in particular for students

with Access Needs impacting their residence, e.g. disabled students and care leavers / estranged students

- Audit and clear understanding and information available relating to accessible accommodation

- Relevant training available to SRA team

- Identify and develop a clear and methodical communication tool for students with access requirements (accommodation SoRA?)

Priorities for the 2019-20 academic year

- Work on the objectives that focus on improving current practice and information.

- Review the UCL website, in particular the SSW pages and ensure a consistent use of terminology and language that eliminates deficit and medical model language and all of our template communications.

- Review current organisations we are working with and review current working relationships and agreements.

- Identify the areas of support that are required and reach out to local organisations, wherever possible agreeing referral pathways and communication and data capture strategies.

- Increase the number of students accessing the support recommended to them through their funding agencies, such as Mental Health Mentoring and Specialist Study Skills Support and track this through communications and regular meetings with our providers both in-house and externally. Use and capture data using self-reflection tools.

- Develop SLAs and KPIs for our key processes and students accessing the service: Drop-in, appointment, Applicant Support Questionnaire, request for mentoring or study skills, return to study, student of concern, requesting a SoRA, RtS

- Audit and clear understanding and information available relating to accessible accommodation and make this information available in time for the students applying 2020/21 academic year.