

Mental Health Charter: Principles of Good Practice

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Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance:	Learning Culture & Codes of Practice, Safer Suicide Strategy, Student Engagement & Support through Studies Policy
Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy should be available in accessible format for all students.
Further information: <i>Note: NSCD can apply for the University Mental Health Charter with Full Degree Awarding Power (FDAP) – these principles have been informed by the Framework.</i>	

Mental Health Charter - Principles of Good Practice

The principles and practices outlined below summarize NSCD's approach to supporting the mental health of students and staff. The intention within these principles is that NSCD will ultimately apply for the Mental Health Charter award, which would seek to recognize our commitment to improving mental health outcomes for the whole NSCD community.

The 'Domains' and themes/principles within each Domain mirror those of the 2nd edition of the University Mental Health Charter Framework (2024).

DOMAIN 1: LEARN

1.1 Transition into University

Transition into university has long been recognized as a potentially stressful process, during which many students can experience distress, anxiety, sleep issues, isolation and a reduction in self-esteem. The quality of the transition into university can have long-term effects on both students' academic success and their wellbeing.

<u>What does it cover?</u>	<u>Principles of good practice:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-application communication - outreach activity• Pre-entry support and preparation for university• Recruitment and admissions processes• The transition into university• Induction/orientation• The first year*	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD takes a whole university approach to transition, embedding measures to support the positive transition of all students across their provision and into the curriculum.2. Measures to support transition begin from pre-application and continue through application, pre-entry, arrival, induction and through the first year. These include actions like outreach to any students declaring health, wellbeing or support needs during their application process, along with contact with students' previous training providers to establish useful practices.3. Measures to support transition aim to promote wellbeing, efficacy, academic integration and social connectedness. Timetabled induction schedules aim to inform students of the support services available and how to access these, along with an overview of the social and extra-curricular activities to aid social connections. Overseas students are invited to an extended induction schedule to orientate themselves within the city.

	<p>4. NSCD provides additional or specific interventions for students who face additional barriers.</p> <p>5. NSCD monitors and aims to adapt practices, learning culture and structures to remove barriers to successful transition and to ensure the university environment is fully accessible to the whole student community. Much of this work can be seen in the ongoing Access and Participation Plans for 2025 onwards</p>
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**This doesn't just mean first year undergraduate. It also covers postgraduate students and direct undergraduate entrants onto year 2 and 3.*

1.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

There is a two-way relationship between student learning and student wellbeing. The ways in which students engage with learning and the design, structure and delivery of their training can have both positive and negative effects on student wellbeing and learning. Workload, codes of practice, teaching and learning methods, assessments and approaches to feedback and grading can have both beneficial and detrimental effects.

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum design • Pedagogy • Assessment strategies • Support for learning • Inclusivity and academic integration • The role of academic staff* 	<p><u>Principles of good practice:</u></p> <p>1. NSCD ensures that the curriculum takes a holistic and inclusive view of learners, using evidence-informed practice to enable all students to develop skills, confidence, academic self-efficacy and improve performance. This can be evidenced for example in the approach taken with alternative assessment tasks based on student need.</p> <p>2. NSCD ensures that the curriculum is designed to facilitate students to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at an appropriate pace. All students have the opportunity to feedback on their experience of the curriculum and contribute to the ongoing evolution of NSCD's training programme.</p> <p>3. NSCD ensures that the curriculum and pedagogic practice encourages deep learning, meaning, mastery and development.</p> <p>4. NSCD ensures that the curriculum design, pedagogic practice and academic processes consider and seek to impact positively on the mental health and wellbeing of all students.</p>
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	<p>5. NSCD clarifies the role of academics in supporting student mental health and guides staff to maintain supportive, appropriate boundaries. All staff are made aware of the available support services for students and how to encourage and signpost students to access support.</p> <p>6. NSCD ensures that staff in teaching and learning support roles understand how they can support student mental health and wellbeing through good pedagogic practice.</p>
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**All staff involved in teaching and learning, including supervisors, personal tutors, teaching staff, guest tutors and learning support staff.*

1.3 Progression

There is evidence that university interventions that prepare students for transitions throughout their training through to graduation and beyond can have a positive impact.

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression from each academic year to the next and/or between academic levels • Progression to time out on professional placement opportunities and back into learning • Progression back through breaks in study • Progression and transition to life beyond university 	<p><u>Principles of good practice:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD supports students to prepare for the multiple, ongoing transitions they encounter during their university career, e.g. between years/levels of study. This includes activities such as re-inductions at each stage and preparing students for the expectations and structure of the next level of study ahead of each academic year. 2. NSCD provides targeted support for students on placement and on professional programmes, who may require more in-depth preparation and specific interventions. 3. NSCD provides adequate support for students taking breaks in study and proactively supports their transition back into education. This can include actions like access to wellbeing support over a break and phased returns to full time study following injury / exceptional circumstances. 4. NSCD supports students to prepare for life, career and further study beyond graduation through events such as careers week and regular workshops/taught sessions from external guests 5. NSCD ensures that support for these transitions is structurally embedded into curriculum and university practice.
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DOMAIN 2: SUPPORT

2.1 Support services

University support services have long been at the forefront of responding to student mental health and remain a key element in a whole-university approach.

<u>What does it cover? *</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services to respond to students experiencing mental health problems• Support for long term mental illness• Services to support students with issues that may impact on mental health and wellbeing e.g.finance, disability, faith etc.	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD ensures that support services are appropriately resourced and responsive to demand to avoid lengthy waiting times2. NSCD ensures that support services are safe (through robust recruitment, monitoring and supervising of support services).3. NSCD ensures that support services are effective. This is evaluated through a variety of ways, from student feedback to use of tools such as the CORE10 form for mental wellbeing4. NSCD ensures that support services are responsive to current and future need and to local context. Careful recruitment and consideration of representation within the support service to meet student need is at the heart of NSCD's EEDI ethos.5. NSCD ensures that support services are equally accessible to all students.6. NSCD ensures that support services are well-governed.
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**Staff support is discussed in the Staff Wellbeing section*

2.2 Risk

The University Mental Health Charter has indicated that university support services are seeing more students with enduring and complex mental health difficulties and a higher level of risk of suicide. Although NSCD cannot take ultimate responsibility for the safety of seriously ill students, or keeping safe those who require urgent psychiatric interventions, we do have a responsibility to avoid harm and plan for prevention, intervention and postvention activities.

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk related to suicide • Risk related to mental health crisis • Risk to wellbeing from others 	<p><u>Principles of good practice:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD has in place effective practice, processes and training for alerting and assessing risk to staff and students, and appropriately referring those at risk to internal or external services. 2. NSCD ensures staff have access to timely, expert advice and guidance. 3. NSCD provides interventions for all affected by risk and suicide and provides support for those at risk, when waiting for external interventions through the adoption of the university safer-suicide postvention strategies. 4. NSCD reduces risk by ensuring it provides a safe physical environment and university culture. 5. NSCD supports students to be able to report concerns.
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2.3 External partnerships and pathways

There has been increasing recognition on the part of universities, the NHS, government bodies and the wider HE sector of the need to improve collaboration between universities and the NHS / Social Care to better improve the support mentally ill students receive locally.

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with primary and secondary health care • Relationships with social care • Relationships with 3rd sector providers • Relationships with Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) funded private suppliers 	<p><u>Principles of good practice:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD is able and willing to work collaboratively with NHS/Social Care to support individual students, including referral letters and signposting to relevant services. 2. NSCD supports NHS/Social Care and other relevant agencies to understand the context of student life and the implications of treatment options and other decisions. Current examples of this include NSCDs attendance at the Leeds Student Health and Welfare Board meetings which are also attended by NHS and social care representatives. 3. NSCD has arrangements in place to assess risk and effectively communicate this to NHS/Social Care. 4. NSCD works with NHS/Social Care to support students to return to study when appropriate. 5. NSCD works collaboratively with DSA funded private providers, ensuring they are aware of providers who provide support to their students and that those providers understand the
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	mechanisms for reporting concerns.
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2.4 Information sharing

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing information with families, guardians, spouses or relevant people in the lives of students • Sharing information with statutory services* 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD works with students to mobilise all of their available resources to support their mental health – especially in instances of crisis 2. NSCD acknowledges and demonstrates understanding that working with families, statutory services and others can provide effective support for students with poor mental health. 3. Student autonomy is central to decision making in relation to sharing information, and is enabled as far as possible, unless the individual is appropriately assessed to lack mental capacity. 4. NSCD ensures that any decision to override student wishes or to pass on information without consent is done as a result of an appropriate, well governed, clinical assessment, is consistent with relevant national guidance, is clearly justifiable and is in the best interests of the student. 5. NSCD ensures that information is passed to the most appropriate people, who can reduce risk. 6. Confidentiality arrangements are clear, accessible and highly visible
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**Information sharing within the university is covered in Cohesiveness of Support Across the provider*

DOMAIN 3: WORK

3.1 Staff wellbeing

The wellbeing of staff is a crucial component of any whole-university approach to mental health. Areas that are important to consider and address are: numbers of staff accessing mental health support; workload demands; low levels of autonomy; working hours and work/life balance; impact of supporting student needs and management culture.

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workplace culture and conditions• Interventions to support good staff wellbeing• Support for staff who are experiencing problems with their mental health	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD ensures staff feel able to discuss their own mental health and wellbeing and have access to effective, accessible support and proactive interventions to help them improve their own mental health and wellbeing via HR.2. NSCD equips managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support good wellbeing within their teams and respond appropriately when staff experience poor mental health.3. NSCD ensures that staff feel secure and psychologically safe to innovate, identify potential improvements to benefit wellbeing and raise concerns about culture and practices that may impact on mental health.4. NSCD enables staff to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle and workplace behaviours.5. NSCD supports staff to spend a significant proportion of their time on work that is meaningful to them and appropriate to their role
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3.2 Staff development

Given the increase in student and staff mental health needs, and the inevitability of students approaching staff that they trust and are accessible to them, it is important to ensure that all staff feel prepared and supported to respond appropriately and effectively to student mental health support needs and are clear on the boundaries between academic and support functions. Teaching staff are not expected to become mental health experts but should be supported to competently respond to and signpost students to appropriate support services.

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training and development on mental health • Role specific training on responding to student mental ill health and clarifying boundaries • Ongoing development of staff in mental health roles • Training managers to support staff in supporting students • Training managers to support good wellbeing, within their teams and respond appropriately to staff experiencing poor mental health 	<p><u>Principles of good practice:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD supports staff to develop, individually and collectively, the confidence and ability to promote positive mental health and respond appropriately to poor mental health. 2. NSCD supports staff to recognise and respond appropriately to indicators or disclosures of poor mentalhealth and signs of risk and to signpost effectively, maintaining the safe boundaries of their role. 3. Staff receive mental health training thatis context and role specific. 4. NSCD ensures staff in mental health roles engage in regular, ongoing clinical development
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DOMAIN 4: LIVE

4.1 Social integration and belonging

Belonging and social integration are important not just for student wellbeing, but also for motivation, engagement, enjoyment, academic achievement and progression to graduation. Contrarily, student loneliness has been shown to be the strongest overall predictor of mental distress in the UK student population.

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring students become socially integrated into university• Creating a safe, inclusive community• Tackling isolation	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD takes considered action to ensure a diverse, safe community. This is achieved through such initiatives as the Learning culture and codes of practice, policies around safeguarding and protecting student rights and valuing the development of student-led groups and activities to build community.2. NSCD actively and systematically supports the social integration of all students and to tackle the causes and effects of social isolation.3. NSCD provides support for students experiencing loneliness4. NSCD works to prevent and address marginalisation, discrimination or harassment of individual students and groups. For example the commitments outlined within our Equality, Equity, diversity and Inclusion strategy.5. NSCD ensures social cohesion and individual differences exist alongside each other, taking account of power dynamics and imbalances.
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4.2 Physical environment

Our physical environment and how we interact with it has a significant impact on our mental health and wellbeing.

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and maintenance of work, learning and living spaces within the university• Provision and use of green spaces and nature• Movement between buildings and way-finding• Reducing risk through the physical environment	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD engages with evidence and the community to embed wellbeing and accessibility within the design of new buildings and developments where relevant and in any redevelopment of its current estate.2. NSCD ensures that the design and allocation of working and learning spaces effectively supports the learning/work undertaken within that space.3. NSCD facilitates and encourages opportunities for students and staff to engage with nature4. NSCD ensures staff and students have access to appropriate social space5. NSCD ensure that wayfinding is clear and makes navigating campus easy for all.
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4.3 Positive Interventions and a mentally healthy environment

‘Prevention is better than cure’

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring a culture and environment that supports good mental health• Proactive interventions to improve the mental health of the whole community• Proactive interventions targeted at the mental health of specific groups of students	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD promotes the mental health of all members of the community through education, actively encouraging healthy behaviours and community building, and providing proactive interventions to improve wellbeing.2. NSCD takes steps to create an environment and culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing3. NSCD takes steps to create an environment that facilitates and makes it easy for individuals and groups to adopt healthy behaviours, offering multiple and varied options and interventions. This may be seen in the approach to healthy eating which is
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	<p>demonstrated through educational nutrition sessions, meal planning support, affordable, nutritious meals on-site, through to the availability of internal and external support and treatment for those experiencing disordered eating.</p> <p>4. NSCD takes steps to create a culture that prioritises mental health as important and are open and highly visible in doing so.</p> <p>5. NSCD takes steps to create a culture in which individuals feel safe and supported to disclose poor mental health.</p>
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4.4 Residential Accommodation

Residential accommodation can have a major bearing on student experience, mental health and wellbeing. As NSCD does not offer its own residential accommodation, our responsibility here lies in the support available to students in private accommodation.

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting students in private accommodation (houses, flats or halls of residence) 	<p><u>Principles of good practice:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD works with Unipol and local accommodation providers to ensure that student accommodation is safe and positive for mental wellbeing 2. NSCD provides accessible support for students who may be living with a flat mate who is experiencing significant mental illness
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DOMAIN 5; ENABLING THEMES

5.1 Leadership, strategy and policy

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• University-wide strategy• University policies and procedures• Visible and effective university leadership committed to improving mental health	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD has a strategic whole university approach to mental health that is embedded in day to day practice and culture. For example the commitment to the half termly Student Review Board meetings.2. NSCD has an approach to mental health and wellbeing which is robustly evidence informed.3. NSCD has an approach to mental health and wellbeing that is co-produced with staff and students, seeks to mobilise the whole community and considers mental health across the whole university.4. NSCD's approach to mental health and wellbeing is evident in other strategies, policies, procedures and practice.5. There is visible leadership and commitment to mental health across the entire school.6. NSCD's approach to mental health is clearly linked to and part of core institutional missions.
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5.2 Student voice and participation

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student involvement in the development of mental health strategies• Student voice and participation in shaping key university strategies that affect mental health (e.g. teaching and learning strategies)• Student voice, participation and co-creation of services and responses to mental health• Processes for students to raise concerns and highlight issues which may positively or negatively impact on their mental health	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD works in partnership with students to develop mental health related strategy and policy.2. NSCD works in partnership with students to shape the ongoing development and oversight of support services.3. NSCD works in partnership with students and staff to create a culture that supports good wellbeing.4. NSCD takes proactive steps to ensure that a diverse range of student and staff voices are considered in developing responses to mental health.5. NSCD ensures that student-led or peer support interventions are safe, appropriately resourced and well- managed.
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6. Cohesiveness of support across the provider

<u>What does it cover?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration and cohesiveness across and between student support service teams• Collaboration and cohesiveness of response between student support services and academic staff• Collaboration and cohesiveness of response between student support service teams and other professional services staff	<u>Principles of good practice:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NSCD ensures cohesion and appropriate collaboration between different support services.2. NSCD ensures cohesion and appropriate collaboration between support services and academic teams. Evidenced through meetings such as the Student Review Boards3. NSCD facilitates appropriate sharing of information across the institution to support individual students.4. NSCD ensures effective signposting and triage across the institution.
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	5. NSCD works to develop a shared vision and understanding between different parts of the university community, towards mental health.
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7. Inclusivity and intersectional mental health

<p><u>What does it cover?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and students who may face additional challenges due to structural, personal or cultural inequalities e.g. LGBTQ+ students, students from the global majority, care leavers, disabled students, mature students, carers, widening participation students, first generation students, international students, students for whom English is a second language and others (this is not an exhaustive list) • Students who may face additional challenges due to Higher Education specific inequalities such as their mode of study, relationship to campus or status as non-traditional students e.g. Online learners, part time students, postgraduate research and postgraduate taught students, commuter students, students on professional placements and students studying overseas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSCD takes action to understand their population and staff and students' differing needs and experiences 2. NSCD ensures that that culture and environment is inclusive, welcoming and safe for all members of the university community. 3. NSCD develops specific interventions that address the barriers to mental health and wellbeing faced by particular groups due to structural, personal or cultural inequalities. 4. NSCD develops specific interventions that address the barriers to mental health and wellbeing faced by particular groups due to higher education specific inequalities, such as mode of study or access. 5. NSCD ensures support services work to improve their cultural competence and are able to respond to different student backgrounds, characteristics and experiences.
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