



# Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

## 2021/22

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 NMITE is committed to providing a safe and positive study and living environment for our students and to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of all of our community members. NMITE recognises that mental health is just as important as physical health: Everyone has mental health and like physical health, it fluctuates along a spectrum from good to poor.
- 1.2 Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential in ensuring mental and physical wellbeing. Achieving the balance helps maintain good mental health, promotes physical health and wellbeing, increases the ability to engage positively and productively with studies and helps a student to become a rounded individual with resilience and confidence to face challenges that may arise throughout life.
- 1.3 With this policy, we recognise our duty of care to all within our community, we aim to support our students and create a healthy and happy environment. We want everyone to feel valued and be treated fairly. NMITE believes that no student should be disadvantaged from succeeding in their studies due to mental health difficulties or conditions. NMITE is committed to providing flexibility to facilitate students' success.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all prospective and current students at NMITE. NMITE ensures that prospective students have clear and accurate information on the support services which it provides. This policy applies to students with both fluctuating and long-standing issues around mental health.
- 2.2 This policy does not address the mental health needs of NMITE staff who are encouraged to consult with the Human Resources department for further information and support.
- 2.3 This policy does not offer an alternative or replacement for external community mental health services and does not replicate NHS Mental Health provision.

## 3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- i. promote positive mental health wellbeing by providing information, direct support, and signposting.
- ii. provide advice and information on the support options available.
- iii. enable those with mental health related issues to self-disclose and seek help.
- iv. offer guidelines to students and staff regarding their responsibilities.
- v. offer guidelines for developing strategies to support positive mental health.
- vi. explain the legal context and responsibilities.



## **4. Legal Context**

- 4.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA); places a duty on an institution to do everything reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of those affected by its undertaking, including its students. In the context of student mental health, this includes having in place appropriate systems and practices to manage and support students with mental health difficulties.
- 4.2 The Equality Act 2010; protects students with disabilities (including mental health difficulties) from discrimination and places a duty upon institutions to make reasonable adjustments for students declaring a disability. NMITE will positively engage in enabling reasonable adjustments to our applicants and students.
- 4.3 The Mental Health Act 1983 allows individuals to be admitted to hospital, detained, and treated without their consent, either for their own health and safety, or for the protection of other people. People can be admitted, detained, and treated under different sections of the Mental Health Act, depending on the circumstances. If there are concerns that an individual is acutely unwell as a result of a mental health condition, staff should refer to the Student Mental Health Support and Intervention Guidance (Appendix 1)
- 4.4 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 is founded on the principle that every adult has the right to make their own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to make those decisions unless it is determined that they lack the capacity to make a particular decision.
- 4.5 NMITE Data Protection Policy; in line with GDPR is key in understanding how information is gathered and used. Refer to Disclosure and Confidentiality for further information.

## **5. Rights and Responsibilities**

### **5.1 Students**

- 5.1.1 All students at NMITE have a right to live and study at NMITE without being subject to prejudice or discrimination as a result of their mental health difficulties or conditions.
- 5.1.2 All students experiencing a form of mental health difficulty or condition have a right to support from NMITE with this, taking into consideration the limits of provision the NMITE offers.
- 5.1.3 All students should:
  - i. Contribute towards building a non-stigmatising community, including treating fellow students with dignity.
  - ii. Engage with mental health awareness training.



- iii. Seek help if they have a mental health issue internally and/or externally.
- iv. Inform relevant staff if unable to fulfil academic commitments as soon as possible, to enable support processes to be put in place.
- v. Encourage other students to seek help if they have a mental health difficulty.
- vi. Be aware of their own limitations if supporting a fellow student experiencing a mental health issue, and use the referral processes available, both internally and externally.

## **5.2 Declaration**

- 5.2.1 NMITE recognises that students may find it hard to declare a mental health difficulty, possibly because that difficulty affects their insight into their situation and their willingness to seek help. Reluctance to declare can also reflect anxieties about the response to a declaration including the worry that it will affect their academic standing; fear that confidentiality will not be respected; and fear of stigma.
- 5.2.2 NMITE encourages students to declare any difficulties at an early stage so that the help they may need can be discussed and addressed in a timely manner. This is particularly important if the student's health problems are having an adverse effect on their academic studies, or if adjustments need to facilitate continued engagement with studies.
- 5.2.3 A student's right not to declare a mental health difficulty will be respected though this will make it more difficult for NMITE to support them appropriately.

## **5.3 Staff**

All staff should:

- i. Contribute towards building a non-stigmatising community, including treating students with dignity, and encouraging them to seek help if they have mental health issues.
- ii. Be aware of the policy, procedures, services available and referral processes for dealing with mental health issues.
- iii. Be aware of their personal limitations when assisting students with mental health difficulties or conditions and should refer to the Student Mental Health Policy Guidelines for staff supporting students for further information (see appendix 1).
- iv. Be aware of the principles of confidentiality and disclosure.
- v. The Head of Student Experience is responsible for monitoring this policy on an annual basis.

## **5.4 NMITE**

NMITE has responsibility to:



- i. take a holistic approach in the promotion of wellbeing which visions an open and inclusive community which promotes equality of opportunity and challenges mental health stigma.
- ii. ensure that where a student declares a mental health difficulty or condition to make reasonable adjustments to prevent the student being unduly disadvantaged by this difficulty.
- iii. disseminate information and guidance relating to the Mental Health Policy to all staff and provide training and updates where appropriate.
- iv. establish effective links with local health and voluntary sector mental health groups.
- v. responsibility to review and develop this policy dependant on student feedback and changes in the wider area of mental health support.

## **6. Disclosure and confidentiality**

- 6.1 Ensuring confidentiality is vital in encouraging students to come forward and seek help when appropriate. Any information students provide will be treated with respect and will only be passed on to those who need to know with their consent. The aim is to encourage students to come forward and seek help.
- 6.2 If information is required by outside agencies (via phone, letter etc.) – for example by psychiatrists, GPs – the rights of the student will be protected. NMITE will not disclose to any third party unless the student has given consent for the information to be passed to outside agencies.
- 6.3 NMITE will clarify why the agency requires this information before imparting it, and whether it is pertinent and relevant to that student’s support and treatment, or their safety or the safety of others.
- 6.4 NMITE adheres to the general principle that consent should be sought before information is shared, with exceptions in the student’s vital interests.
- 6.5 All staff within NMITE are bound by Data Protection legislation under which all data related to a person’s mental health is regarded as sensitive personal data. There is an obligation to ensure such data is kept securely.

Further information can be found in the NMITE Date Protection Policy

## **7. Support for students**

- 7.1 There is a range of information and support services for students which promote the general health and wellbeing of the student community; and support students experiencing mental health difficulties.
- 7.2 NMITE is an education institution and there will be limitations on the support services it is able to offer individuals. Students also have the right to decline any support offered or to act upon any advice given.



- 7.3 Arrival at NMITE and living away from home (in some cases for the first time) is a significant transition period and important milestone, bringing with it new and exciting experiences. Although this new environment may provide students with a range of opportunities to develop and flourish, the impact of the transition may be greater for some students than others. Advice on managing transition forms part of the NMITE Induction week which includes clear signposting to the provision of Wellbeing and Mental Health Support services.

## **8. Student Support Team**

- 8.1 Through the application process prospective students with mental health support needs are encouraged to make these known, so that appropriate adjustments to the admissions process can be made. Early declaration also assists in the timely provision of support once students commence their studies. All staff who have contact with applicants should encourage early disclosure of additional needs to support this process.
- 8.2 The Student Support Team offers a confidential consultation service during the admissions process as well as on experience/open and selection days should a prospective student wish to discuss their specific support requirements.
- 8.3 For current students, the Student Support Team offers a confidential drop-in and appointment service to all students for any aspect of student life. Further detail is provided within the Student Handbook and on MyNMITE.
- 8.4 Team members are NMITE Mental health Champions and can offer:
- i. individual 1:1 support,
  - ii. signposting to information including regarding Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs),
  - iii. advice on application for reasonable adjustments under the relevant policies,
  - iv. mental health support plans,
  - v. monitoring of students with mental health difficulties
  - vi. where appropriate referral and liaison with external agencies.
- 8.5 The Student Support Team may also assist, advise, and liaise with relevant academic staff on how best to support students' mental health.

## **9. Personal Tutor**

- 9.1 The student's Personal Tutor, who is a member of the Academic Team; is primarily responsible for overseeing and supporting academic progress, they may also be the first port of call in the event of any difficulties, whether course related or personal. Personal Tutors can signpost to information and services and refer or encourage the student to self-refer to the Student Support Team



## **10. Chaplaincy Services**

- 10.1 The Chaplaincy service provides spiritual support for students and staff. It is open to students and staff of all faith/non-faith backgrounds and denominations. The NMITE Chaplain can be contacted via Student Support Services or directly via e-mail – chaplaincy@nmite.ac.uk

## **11. Wellbeing**

- 11.1 NMITE provide information and advice to students which promotes their wellbeing, this is accessible via MyNMITE. It focuses on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and as well as providing a Wellbeing assessment tool, it signposts to self-help resources including on-line, books and mobile apps.

### **11.2 Right Steps**

As part of its integrated Wellbeing and Mental Health services, NMITE students have access to Right Steps; an on-demand wellbeing and mental health platform designed to create long-term behaviour changes to help reduce stress, anxiety, and low mood, providing support to help live a happier life. Right Steps offers the latest information and advice about a wide range of health and wellbeing topics. These include:

5 ways to Wellbeing

Anxiety

Low Mood

Stress

Healthy eating

Physical Activity

Sleep difficulties

Help to Stop smoking

Students can directly access Right Steps via MyNMITE

## **12. Information on alcohol and drugs**

- 12.1 Students can also access the Right Steps confidential counselling service. NMITE staff do not receive any information relating to students who have accessed different sections, although do have access to a report of the resources viewed the most. This supports NMITE to target its wellbeing promotion activities.

## **13. Mental Health**

- 13.1 Mental health issues are any conditions that affect a person's state of mind. These conditions may include mild depression, stress, and severe anxiety. Mental health difficulties manifest in different ways and exist across a spectrum of states of mind and behaviours, from temporary reactive responses to painful events through to more debilitating and persistent conditions.



- 13.2 NMITE provide information and advice to students which actively supports good mental health, this is accessible via MyNMITE. It includes information on local services and signposting to external support organisations for general mental health support and support for specific mental health conditions.

#### **14. NMITE Mental Health Champions**

- 14.1 NMITE have committed to all staff receiving mental health training, some team members receive a higher level of training and have become Mental Health Champions, with the knowledge and skills to recognise and support people with mental health conditions. For students, the Mental Health Champions are members of the Student Support Team:

Mary Kenyon-James, Head of Student Experience

Mark Fisher – Student Support Manager

And

Tam Milner - Academic Registrar

#### **15. Mental Health Support Plan**

- 15.1 Mental Health Champions will offer time and expertise to work with students to develop a Mental Health Support Plan if required, they will support appropriate referral to professional mental health services if required. A mental health support plan does not replace this but should be viewed as an additional 'tool' to support students to maintaining good mental health.

#### **16. Counselling**

- 16.1 Counselling Services offer a confidential space for students to explore and reflect on mental health issues, and to help develop strategies to manage and overcome difficulties or conditions.
- 16.2 Student Support Services can provide students with access to accredited counselling provision for a short term counselling service. On referral, students will be invited for an assessment consultation with an accredited counsellor with up to 6 further sessions made available, depending on need.

#### **17. Local Support Services**

- 17.1 NMITE is committed to establish effective links with local health and voluntary sector mental health groups. The Student Support Team maintain a directory of local and national support services. Accessing mental health services in Herefordshire will in the first instance through GP services; students are encouraged to register with a GP in Hereford during Induction week.



## **18. Additional Factors and Considerations**

### **18.1 Offsite working**

- 18.1.1 During their learning students are likely to participate in off-site working. The Personal Tutor or Module Lead are responsible for assessing the risks involved, including those related to a pre-existing mental health condition for which plans can then be made; they may do this jointly with the Student Support Team if required.
- 18.1.2 As part of the risk assessment process, the Personal Tutor or Module Lead specifies the frequency of the contact they will maintain with their students, providing an opportunity for concerns to be identified. Part of the briefing for all students engaging in offsite working will include suitable contact details in the event of difficulties.
- 18.1.3 Whilst distance from NMITE imposes some constraints, students undertaking offsite working away from the NMITE are still entitled to access support from the Student Support Team via e-mail and telephone contact.

### **18.2 Conduct and Discipline**

- 18.2.1 Mental health difficulties do not exclude students from the requirement to comply with NMITE regulations and Student Code of Conduct
- 18.2.2 In situations where a student's ability to participate in disciplinary procedures is affected by mental health difficulties, the situation will be approached with due sensitivity, ensuring that the student is fit to take part and is appropriately supported.
- 18.2.3 In relation to conduct, mitigating circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis, the disciplinary panel will consider appropriate sanctions and requirements for continuation of studies.

### **18.3 Limitations and non-engagement**

- 18.3.1 The Student Support Team will make every effort to engage with the student to form a package of available support with an aim to enabling the student to productively engage with their studies. Engagement with any of the support suggested or offered by staff is at the discretion of the student and their wishes in terms of accessing support will be respected.
- 18.3.2 In cases where it becomes apparent that an individual student's support needs are beyond the responsibilities of NMITE, the Academic Registrar or Head of Experience will alert the Chief Academic Officer to the situation. A joint decision will be made on whether the student's nominated emergency contact should be informed. Ideally, this should involve a conversation about consent to avoid increasing risk, the negative effects of losing control over decisions or overriding privacy.



18.3.3 Where this is not possible, a judgement may be made in the best interests of the person who is causing concern.

#### **18.4 Leave of Absence**

18.4.1 In such circumstances the use of the Leave of Absence Policy may be considered to safeguarding a student's placement at NMITE whilst enabling the student to seek structured professional mental health support.

18.4.2 NMITE would only recommend this course of action because of the level of concern regarding student's mental health impacting on their ability to fully engage and with their learning experience. It will only be considered on the basis that either the support has been offered to the student has been declined, or that support has been put in place and the level of concern is at such a point that it is still resulting in an unmanageable situation for the individual and/or NMITE.

18.4.3 If a Leave of Absence is agreed and where a student's next-of-kin/emergency contact is not able to be involved in the practical arrangements (for example, assisting the student in making arrangements to return home), the Student Support Team, will endeavour to provide a reasonable level of support.

#### **18.5 Returning to Study**

18.5.1 Following a period of absence from NMITE for the purposes of recuperation due to a mental health difficulty, it will be necessary to ensure that the student is supported to resume studying. This includes but is not limited to, academic support and/or reasonable adjustments to be discussed through the Student Support Team.

18.5.2 Application to return to study is detailed within the Leave of Absence Policy; NMITE are likely to require evidence of a period of sustained good mental health and active management strategies of the student's mental health condition. This is not to say that a student would not be expected to experience further mental health difficulties but is demonstrative of a commitment to take responsibility for their own mental health and the proactive management of their wellbeing.

#### **18.6 Impact on other Students and Staff**

18.6.1 NMITE has a duty of care to all staff and students. There is a balance between the duty of care to a student with a mental health difficulty and the overall duty of care to staff and other students. At times, a student with a mental health difficulty may present with behaviours which have an impact on others.

18.6.2 If students are finding another student's behaviour distressing or challenging it is key that they speak with someone about this and the impact that it is having on them. Students are encouraged to speak with their Personal Tutor or the Student Support Team.



18.6.3 If staff experience behaviour which they find distressing, then they are encouraged to speak directly with their line manager and HR to seek support.



## 19. Appendix 1 - Student Mental Health Support and Intervention Guidelines

The literature on mental health suggests that 1 in 4 people experience mental health difficulties at some point during their life. Within student populations, research has shown this figure increases with a higher incidence of mental health problems amongst students compared to the general population.

In 2019 the Department for Education identified four key areas of risk that can affect the mental health of people going into university or other higher Education. These are:

Independent living – including things like managing finances, having realistic expectations of student life, as well as alcohol and drugs misuse.

Independent learning – helping students to engage with their course, cope with their workload and develop their own learning style and skills.

Healthy relationships – supporting students with the skills to make positive friendships and engage with diverse groups of people. Other risks can include abusive partners, relationship breakdowns and conflict with others.

Wellbeing – including loneliness and vulnerability to isolation, social media pressures and ‘perfectionism’. Students may also not know how to access support for their wellbeing.

MyNMITE contains a wealth of information regarding all the risks identified above set up with sections

Wellbeing

Mental Health information and services

Safe Lifestyle

Healthy Lifestyle

Money Matters

The following guidelines are intended for use where you have prior knowledge of or growing concerns that a student is experiencing emotional or psychological distress.

You can find detailed information on different mental health conditions and links to external organisations that can provide support on MyNMITE]

### Spotting the signs

Spotting the signs early and starting the conversation is important in ensuring the student accesses appropriate information and support from an early stage.

The signs of distress can vary from person to person and at times can be difficult to identify. One of the main indicators is noticing a change in the student’s behaviour, this may have been brought to your attention by:

- the student themselves.



- direct observation on your part; or
- a third party who has made you aware of the situation e.g. your colleague or a friend of the student.

Typically, these changes may include:

- Tearfulness and looking unhappy
- Loss of interest in activities
- Drop in academic performance
- Mood swings that are rapid or out of character
- Evidence of self-harming behaviour, such as cutting
- Change in eating habits (binge eating, over-eating, not eating)
- Sleep problems (not sleeping, sleeping much more)
- Increased anxiety, seeming agitated or jumpy, panic attacks
- Loss of energy, and being tired or lethargic
- Increasing social isolation (socialising less, uncharacteristically missing lectures, avoiding friends etc.)
- Dramatically increased energy, going out much more, needing very little sleep, rapid speech, over excitement or euphoria etc.
- Hearing, seeing, or believing things that are a distortion of reality (hallucinations or delusions)

This is not an exhaustive list and may not in isolation indicate that the student is emotionally distressed or experiencing a mental health problem. Speaking with the student discreetly will help you establish if further support is required.

### **Your role in the support network**

It is important that staff work within the boundaries of their knowledge and experience when offering support to a student with a known or potential mental health problem.

If the student contacts you via email; try to avoid a lengthy response or get into a repetitive e-mail exchange with the student, you do need to advise them of the next steps to gain the support they may require. As an example, you could respond with:

“I’m sorry to learn that you’re feeling overwhelmed right now. It sounds as though things have been difficult recently, so it is important that we get you the support you need. If you would like to come in and chat with me, we can discuss the best way forward. I’m available (suggested dates/times)”



If you meet with a student (often because you may be the first member of staff, they have spoken to about this); you should ensure that you allow a reasonable amount of time for the meeting to take place, that you listen to what the student is saying and also be mindful that they may say something to invoke a reaction, It will be important that you remain as non-judgemental and neutral as possible irrespective of your own private beliefs.

Be mindful to maintain open body language, remove barriers (i.e. do not sit behind a desk); avoid asking intrusive questions, encourage the student to elaborate and share their thoughts and feelings to the degree that they wish to. You should aim to stay within the time frame you have allocated to your appointment with the student.

If at any point during a meeting with a student they become agitated or threatening and you become concerned for your own safety, you should try to remain calm, ask them how you can help and you should reassure them that support is available, if possible, leave the room and contact the Student Support Team/Security team.

A student may discuss something that resonates with your own personal experiences e.g. they are worried that they have bi-polar disorder and someone in your family has this diagnosis; they are recently bereaved having lost a close friend to cancer, and this is something you have experienced. If you do know beforehand that a student's concerns relate to your own experiences and are worried you may become upset or react in a certain way, it is more than acceptable to request that another colleague meet with the student instead.

Avoid being drawn into giving advice about any mental health difficulties other than empathising with their situation and support them to access the information available on MyNMITE, signpost to self-help and support organisation, helplines etc and provide information about the support services that NMITE provide.

Encourage students to involve parents and carers, guardians, or other people they trust early if they run into mental health difficulties. Students' first source of support is often friends and family.

If it becomes apparent that the student's difficulties may benefit from more structured mental health support; encourage them to make an appointment or drop-in to meet with the Student Support Team; practically support them to do this if they are willing at that time.

### **Who to contact?**

For further information staff should refer to the Guide to Student Support Services.

### **Suicide Prevention**

There may be a time when you are faced with a student in crisis who is considering taking their own life. Your role is to help them to get the support that they need, it is



vital that you are able to spot the warning signs and follow the protocol to help prevent any harm to the student, or others.

Warning signs include:

- Talking about suicide
- Preoccupation with death
- No hope for the future
- Withdrawing from others
- Destructive behaviour
- Self-hatred
- Seeking out lethal means (sourcing pills, knives, or other weapons)
- Suicide planning (saying goodbye to people, writing letters to family and friends, arranging finances)

If you suspect that a student is having suicidal thoughts, or they disclose that they are, you should:

Speak up – express your concern to the student and directly ask if they are having thoughts about suicide. It is important to clarify what the student means. Remember, asking whether they are talking about suicide does not put the idea in their mind.

Take action – if they are thinking of suicide, you must share this information. Do not keep this confidential, even if the student asks you to.

Serious concern – student discloses suicidal thoughts but there is no evidence of a plan

- Contact an NMITE Mental Health Champion via Student Support Services for advice or ask the student for their GP details so you can call to make an urgent appointment on their behalf
- If out of hours (Monday to Friday, 9am – 4pm), call Samaritans on 116 123 to instruct you or to speak to the student directly
- Inform the Student Support Team as soon as possible by emailing [studentsupport@nmite.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@nmite.ac.uk) with the subject line ‘Suicide concern’ or contact us to speak to a member of the team. A member of the team will follow up with the student straight away during office hours.

Urgent concern – student is experiencing suicidal thoughts and has developed a plan

- Call the Student Support Team on 01432804545] (staffed Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 4.30pm) for support and to jointly risk assess and agree what to do next



- If out of hours (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 4.30pm), contact Security/Out of Hours phone on 01432 381380 and the NHS 111 to make them aware of the situation and receive guidance
- Stay with the student and await further instruction from the team you have contacted. If possible, inform another member of staff nearby
- You can also contact Papyrus on 0800 068 4141 (available 10:00–22:00 weekdays, 14:00-22:00 weekends/bank holidays) for suicide prevention advice or to speak to the student directly over the phone.

If a student is at immediate risk - student is about to endanger their own life i.e. they report taking an overdose or report not being able to keep themselves safe or threatening to harm someone else; you must act.

If they do confirm they cannot keep themselves safe, remain calm and inform the student that you will be contacting one of the following for help:

- Call 999 as soon as possible
- Call Security/Student Support Services on 01432804545
- Stay with the student and if possible, inform another member of staff nearby.
- Ask the student if there is anyone, they would like to be contacted on their behalf e.g. a friend who can be with them

### **Support for staff**

A student needs to take responsibility for their own mental health, encouraging them to access mental health support is all that you can be reasonably expected to do (with the exception of suicide prevention)

We recognise that supporting a student in crisis can be distressing for staff. Everyone has a different way of coping, ensure that you attend to your own well-being, and it is important to seek support when you need it.

Seek the opportunity to de-brief with a supportive colleague or line manager especially if you are concerned about how this may be affecting your work so that adjustments can be put in place if needed.

Talking to someone – whether family, friends, colleagues or a professional – is one of the best ways to come to terms with the incident.

Support is also available outside of the NMITE. Support after Suicide is an organisation which provides advice, self-help resources and links to local support networks for anyone affected by suicide.