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Institute of Education
University of London

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
University of London

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

The Institute of Education is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and education provider, providing equality of opportunity for all staff and students, for applicants for courses and posts at the Institute, and for visitors. In the provision of equal opportunities, the Institute recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law.

By providing a working and learning environment that values the positive contribution of all its members, the Institute aims to enable all staff and students to achieve their full potential.

The purpose of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy is to support the creation of a context and culture that positively promote mental health and helps prevent mental health problems. The policy will also enable the Institute to adopt an appropriate, consistent and constructive approach to its relations with students and staff with mental health difficulties. The Institute recognises the need to respond appropriately to situations where mental health problems may have a negative impact on working or learning experiences and on the welfare of individual staff and students or that of their colleagues or fellow students.

This policy applies to all staff and students of the Institute of Education. This Policy is supported by guidance offering practical advice to staff on mental health difficulties, dealing with both staff and students. This can be found in Appendix 1.

Interactions with other policies

The Institute's duty of care towards its staff and students is determined externally by legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Human Rights Act (1998), Data Protection Act (1998), Equality Act (2010).

The Institute exercises this duty of care through this Policy and through the following related policies, procedures and guidance:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policies
- Complaints and Grievance Procedures
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Stress Management Policy

Disability and Mental Illness

The Equality Act defines a disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities” and defines “long-term” as “12 months or more”. Certain mental health difficulties may fall under this definition and will therefore qualify as a disability.

Confidentiality and disclosure of information

While all dealings with staff and students are subject to the Institute’s confidentiality policies, it must be emphasised that this is often of paramount importance with regard to those experiencing mental health difficulties.

Students who disclose a mental health difficulty, either upon application or subsequently, will be invited to a meeting with the Disability Co-ordinator in the Disability Support Office. The Disability Support Office has strict ethical guidelines on confidentiality and complies with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. No information given by a student to the Disability Co-ordinator will be disclosed to any person outside the Disability Office without permission by the student to do so, unless there is an identified risk as outlined below.

If a student discloses a disability to a member of staff, that information will be passed on to the Disability Co-ordinator. If a student is not happy for the information to be shared they must opt out of this and sign a document to say that this is the case. A copy of the document will be kept by both parties. Please see the attached guidance note for advice when dealing with student disclosure.

Staff who disclose a mental health difficulty will be supported by the Equalities Manager. Information will be held confidentially by the Equalities Manager and the staff member will be supported in their decision about disclosure. Staff are encouraged to talk to their line manager to ensure that the necessary support can be offered, however this is a personal choice and no information will be disclosed by the Equalities Manager.

It must be emphasised that it may be necessary to breach confidentiality in certain circumstances where the individual is deemed to be a risk either to themselves or to other people. If there is a conflict between this and the preceding statement, then it should be stressed that the safety of the individual and/or the safety of other members of our community takes precedence over confidentiality.

If members of staff are worried about students or other colleagues they should talk to their head of department, Equality and Diversity Adviser, Disability Co-ordinator or the Equalities Manager who will then decide what action to take. Students who are concerned about other students should talk to their Equality and Diversity Adviser, or the Disability Co-ordinator. If there is no-one available and it is an emergency situation then staff should talk to a member of the senior management team in the Directorate. It is essential that staff do not feel they have to make these decisions alone.

Support

The Institute will support to the best of its ability staff and students with mental health difficulties by providing information, advice and also specialist counselling services.

Staff

- All staff who would like to disclose a disability or who have any concerns about their mental health are invited to speak to the Institute's Equalities Manager. All conversations will be treated confidentially. The Equalities Manager will be able to discuss reasonable adjustments and the option of a Work Support Agreement.
- All members of staff can access an external counselling service run by Only Connect. No information is passed back to the Institute so anonymity is guaranteed. Contact details are attached in Appendix 2.
- HR may make referrals to Occupational Health (OH) where this is seen as relevant or where there are questions about employment. Where an individual is no longer able to continue in their current role despite consideration of reasonable adjustments to that role, and where a recommendation is made by an Occupational Health Advisor, ill-health redeployment or ill health retirement may be considered.

Students

- The Disabilities Support Office provides support for students with mental health difficulties and it will liaise with other departments and faculties on the student's behalf if permission is given. It will also answer queries and work to support staff members who are supporting students with mental health difficulties.
- The Disabilities Support Office develop Learning Support Agreements (LSA) for students with mental health difficulties to disseminate information. Students are strongly advised to take up this opportunity as this will mean that they will not have to rearticulate their needs to different staff members. LSAs are only sent to those people to whom disclosure has been agreed with the student. The LSA outlines what type of support is available to the student.
- All Institute students are eligible to use the Gower Street Practice who can make referrals to their counselling team. The Gower Street Practice is an NHS General Practice, independent and separate from the Institute. Contact details are attached in Appendix 2. Referral to the counselling team may take up to three weeks, in an emergency situation individuals should be referred to the nearest hospital.

Fitness to teach

Students at the Institute must comply with the requirements of the Institute and any relevant professional or statutory bodies including, in the case of PGCE students, the requirements relating to fitness to train as a teacher. All students who have been accepted on a PGCE course will be required to fill out an occupational health form. This is a legal requirement. The Institute uses UCL Occupational Health as an

external provider. Occupational Health will then decide whether to see a student further and make recommendations. If Occupational Health considers that a student may need additional support they will refer the student to the Disabilities Support Office who will implement support.

Responsibilities

Responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team:

- Promote the emphasis on good mental health and wellbeing and consider this goal within all relevant aspects of its operation.
- Provide central support and advisory services.
- Produce and disseminate guidance to offer practical step-by-step procedures.
- Provide training to staff and guidance to students.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy through the annual reporting process on disability equality and the disclosure rates of mental health difficulties amongst staff and students.

Responsibility of all staff:

- Contribute towards a non-stigmatising community.
- Treat each student or member of staff with a mental health difficulty as an individual, not a problem or a condition.
- Take advantage of training and information sources.
- Uphold confidentiality (wherever safety is not at risk).
- Recognise the limits to what they can do when supporting peers.
- Inform the Institute of their mental health difficulties in order that the Institute can deal fairly with them and support them where appropriate.

Responsibility of Students

- Contribute towards a non-stigmatising community.
- Recognise the limits to what they can do when supporting peers.
- Refer to support and advice services within the Institute when assistance is required.
- Inform the Institute of their mental health difficulties in order that the Institute can deal fairly with them and support them where appropriate.

Implementation

Implementation of this policy will be achieved through the training of individual staff and through the distribution of this policy and accompanying guidance.

The Institute requires those in a position to influence the working patterns of others (such as those with management and supervisory responsibilities) to encourage employees and students to look after their own mental health; this includes encouraging a proper work-life balance.

Appendix 1

Guidance to support the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

The term 'mental health difficulties' covers a wide range of conditions, including, for example, bipolar disorder, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), anorexia and bulimia. All mental health difficulties will impact on each person differently, therefore it is not easy to classify the effects and impact on each individual. It is particularly important with mental health issues to talk to the person involved to discover what, if any, support or adjustments may be required.

The Institute of Education seeks to create a caring community in which staff and students support each other and are sensitive to one another's wellbeing. This guidance is written with the view that any member of staff or student, where they feel able, should offer support and assistance to a peer who is demonstrating symptoms of possible mental health difficulties. This is not, however, a requirement of the policy, and individuals need to recognise the limits of what they can do to support their peers and refer to the support and advice services detailed in this document when assistance is required. Staff and students need also to be mindful of the fact that however well-intended their actions might be, there will be instances when peers will not welcome an approach and where even the most innocuous acts might be misconstrued.

There is a great deal of support available for students or staff who have a mental health difficulty and also for staff who are working with and teaching students who may have a mental health difficulty. Please see the frequently asked questions section below and also the contacts page in Appendix 2.

Frequently Asked Questions

What support will students with mental health difficulties be offered?

- Students who speak to the Disability Co-ordinator will be offered a Learning Support Agreement (LSA). They will also generally be offered mentoring. This will either be funded through their Disabled Students Allowance or by the Disability Support Office (DSO) supported sessions. Students are then allocated a mentor who will work with them and support them through their course.
- All students have access to the counselling service run by the Gower Street Practice. Please see the contacts section in Appendix 2 for further details.
- Some students may also be offered tutoring support alongside this to offer more academic support.
- Personal tutors have a responsibility to ensure that their students are aware of the support available to them. Tutors should also familiarise themselves with information on mental health issues to ensure they can offer the required support.

What support is available to staff who may have mental health difficulties?

- All staff who talk to the Equalities Manager will be offered the chance to develop a Work Support Agreement to ensure that any adjustments and support can be put in to place.
- All staff are also entitled to access a coach through the Institute's coaching scheme. Staff who have mental health difficulties may be offered coaching on a longer term basis to support them at work.
- All staff also have access to the confidential counselling service, Only Connect. Please see the contacts section in Appendix 2 for further details.
- Line Managers have a responsibility to ensure that their staff members are aware of the support available to them. Line Managers should also familiarise themselves with information on mental health issues to ensure they can offer the required support.

What do I do if I begin to suspect that a student or colleague may be starting to develop early symptoms of mental distress?

- If you feel comfortable about doing so, you could engage the individual in conversation about how they are. If you have experienced them as slightly disengaged or distressed you could mention that they "do not seem their usual self" and you were wondering if anything was the matter and whether you could be of any help at all.
- They may not be willing to talk, but if they are you could, with gentle probing, get them to share a little of what's going on for them.
- Depending on what they say you could suggest a strategy for support, which may well involve them contacting the Disability Support Office or the Equalities Manager, you could arrange to see them for a longer chat in the near future if you feel comfortable doing so.
- If you feel able you could recommend to the counselling service, separate services are available for staff and students. Contact details are provided in Appendix 2.

How do I respond to a very depressed student or colleague?

- Praise is more helpful than criticism. Depression can feed on itself. A person can be depressed and then more depressed about being depressed. Negative thoughts become automatic. It can therefore be very frustrating trying to help. It is important not to collude with the person's desire to withdraw from contact with people. Engage them in conversation and listen sympathetically.
- Feelings of hopelessness that a depressed person might be experiencing can keep them from seeking help. Encourage students to go and speak to a GP at the Gower Street practice, they can then be referred on to see a member of their counselling team. Staff should be encouraged to use the counselling services provided by Only Connect. Contact details are given in Appendix 2.
- Reassure them about the possibility of extensions or deferrals. Encourage them to speak with their tutor about this. They may need a letter of support from the medical or counselling service.

- Pay attention to your own needs because dealing with a very depressed person is very stressful. You may want to talk with a friend, colleague or the counselling service yourself.

What do I do if someone has a panic attack?

- A panic attack may last between 5 and 20 minutes. The stress which has triggered the attack may have caused hyperventilation, which will have lowered the person's carbon dioxide levels, causing dizziness, difficulty breathing and/or chest pains. It can be extremely frightening for the person experiencing it.
- Stay calm and call a first aider.
- If possible escort the student away from the situation they are in to a vacant room or corridor.
- Reassure them as much as possible.
- Encourage them to sit down or stand still and breathe slowly and evenly, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Cupping their hands over their nose and mouth might help them to do this.
- Suggest a drink of water or a walk in the fresh air. Advise against stimulants (e.g. coffee, fizzy drinks, cigarettes) until they are feeling better.

What do I do if someone is screaming hysterically?

- Stay calm. The chances are that the person is feeling very frightened or shocked about something and will not pose a threat to anyone unless this feeling is exacerbated by the actions of those around them.
- Talk reassuringly with them, but without attempting to touch or coerce them.
- Ask anyone else who happens to be nearby to keep clear.
- Try to get the distressed person into a quieter, but not isolated or confined, place,
- Reassure them that no-one will hurt them and that you are there to support them.
- Tell them that it's fine to scream if that's what they need to do. Just be there for them. Repeat, "Nobody is going to hurt you, I am here to help".
- It is likely that they will calm down. At that point, if you feel comfortable, you could begin to ask gentle questions, "what's upsetting you?".
- If the individual is a student suggest that they contact the Gower Street Practice, they can then be referred on to see a member of their counselling team. Contact details are given in Appendix 2.
- If the individual is a staff member suggest that they contact Only Connect, the staff counselling service. Contact details are given in Appendix 2.

What do I do if someone is threatening suicide?

- This is a very serious situation and should be treated as such.
- It is helpful to recognise that talking with someone in such a situation about the possibility of suicide is helpful and will not increase the likelihood of them attempting suicide. However, it is also important to realise that most people who have committed suicide have spoken previously of doing it.

- Just being there for the person and listening in an accepting way can be extremely helpful to the person, reducing their fear and isolation, but it is important to seek professional help.
- If the individual is a student suggest that they contact the Gower Street Practice, they can then be referred on to see a member of their counselling team. Contact details are given in Appendix 2.
- If the individual is a staff member suggest that they contact Only Connect, the staff counselling service. Contact details are given in Appendix
- The Samaritans provide a 24 hour service. This can be an extremely upsetting situation so you may like to talk to the Equalities Manager or to the counselling service available for all staff.

What do I do if someone has harmed themselves?

- Sometimes people cut, burn, scratch or gouge themselves. This is a coping mechanism. It does not necessarily mean that the person wishes to commit suicide. It is more like a survival mechanism, for coping with overwhelming emotions – a way to control feelings of helplessness and powerlessness.
- It is important that the person be offered the opportunity to talk about their feelings. They may benefit from counselling, students should contact the Gower Street Practice, they can then be referred on to see a counsellor. Staff members should contact Only Connect for counselling. Contact details are given in Appendix 2.
- For further advice on how to talk to the individual please contact the Disability Co-ordinator or the Equalities Manager.
- You may want to seek advice from the Counselling Service too, please see the details of Only Connect in Appendix 2. You may yourself be wrestling with feelings of responsibility and disloyalty as well as distress.

What if I become aware of anorexic or bulimic behaviour?

- Eating distress is an expression of deep emotional conflict. Eating itself may provoke feelings of fear, anxiety, guilt and self-hatred. Bulimia is more likely than anorexia to go unnoticed. The person may not be painfully thin and the binge eating, followed by the self-induced vomiting, is likely to happen in private.
- They may be reluctant to seek help, as this will involve giving up control of their eating (the only control they may feel they have). However it is very important that they do see someone in the counselling service. For students, encourage them where possible to speak to a GP at the Gower Street Practice, they can then be referred to a member of their counselling team. For staff members, encourage them to talk to Only Connect, a confidential counselling service. Contact details are in Appendix 2.
- As a Line Manager or Tutor it is essential that you develop trust with the person.

What do I do if someone is being seriously confrontational?

- This kind of crisis situation is rare. Assuring the safety of yourself and others, including the person in crisis, is paramount.

- Remain calm and non-threatening. Don't stare at the person or approach them from behind without warning. Both of these could be interpreted as a threat and could result in a worsening of the situation.
- If there are others around, quietly and calmly ask them to leave the area, unless you consider that this would leave you in danger.
- Engage with the person in crisis, reassuring them that they are not going to be harmed. Repeat yourself if necessary. Don't get too close or touch them. This could frighten them.
- You need to get help from Security, ring 0207 612 5555. Be clear, direct and consistent with the individual about what you are doing, without being patronising or authoritarian.
- If the individual becomes severely disorientated or dangerous, then Security may need to call a GP, the local accident and emergency service or, if necessary, the police.
- This could be a difficult, frightening and distressing experience for you. Make sure you talk with a colleague about it afterwards and find appropriate support for yourself. Don't forget that there is a counselling service available for staff, please see the contacts section for details.

What do I do if other students tell me about someone whose mental health worries them?

- The students may well have found this very difficult. They may be feeling disloyal and uncomfortable speaking behind someone's back. However, they must be very concerned about the person's behaviour to have decided to take this step. So the situation needs to be taken seriously.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing and that the other person's privacy has not been compromised.
- Be clear with them that you can't keep this to yourself; you have to seek advice from the Disability Co-ordinator, reassure them that this will be in confidence.
- Check out whether they themselves are distressed and in need of support.

What do I do if a student misses a lot of classes?

- This needs to be taken seriously. There is a range of possible explanations, but some of them could have serious implications for the student's health. Isolating oneself and withdrawing from social contact can be an early sign of mental illness, possibly depression or even schizophrenia.
- The absences need to be reported to the course leader and they will probably seek out the student and speak to them.
- Where appropriate encourage the student to contact the Disabilities Support Office or the Gower Street Practice.

What do I do if someone bursts into tears on me?

- Don't be embarrassed, alarmed or angry. This is likely to be an appropriate reaction to a life event or an accumulation of stresses.
- Stay calm and clear.
- Reassure the person that it is OK to be crying and that you are there for them and will stay with them. Repeat yourself if necessary.

- Don't pressurise the person into talking before they are ready. They are more likely to calm down if not under any pressure.
- When they have calmed down, try to get them talking about what is distressing them. An opportunity to do this may be all they need.
- However, the difficulties may be ongoing and of a more serious nature. Suggest that they may benefit from seeing a counsellor and pass on the details of the Gower Street Practice to students or Only Connect to staff.

What do I do if a student discloses to me in confidence something that I become seriously concerned about?

- Clearly the student values your trust and confidentiality and so this needs to be handled sensitively.
- If you think the student needs help then the first thing to do is try to persuade them to seek it for themselves from the Disability Support office or Gower Street Practice.
- If they are unwilling, you need to let the student know that you are seriously concerned about their health and don't feel you can offer the kind of support they need any more. You could offer to help them to make an appointment. If the student is still unhappy for you to disclose then you must ask them to sign a disclosure form to say this is the case.
- If this still fails, then you may need to share your anxieties and concerns anonymously with the Disability Co-ordinator, without breaking the student's confidence. They will be able to advise you.

What if a student has a history of mental distress and wants to go into the teaching profession?

- A student is required to declare mental distress that is occurring or has happened in the past to Occupational Health. Occupational Health will determine whether the student is fit to practice or is fit to practice but must have support from the Disabilities Support Office.
- If the Institute does not know about a student's previous difficulties it cannot be held liable for not providing appropriate support to the student during the student's period of study. However, the Institute will be obliged to respond with support should a student become ill whilst studying, as long as the student makes their illness known.
- It is important to bear in mind that anyone could become ill as a result of the stress of teaching practice. This is not solely the preserve of people with a history of mental distress.

What if a student's behaviour is having an adverse effect on others in my group?

- It is important to remember that people whose behaviour is experienced by others as difficult will not necessarily have mental health problems and that people with mental health problems will not necessarily behave in ways which others find difficult.

- The student may not be becoming ill. The student may just be uncomfortable in groups. Explore with the student possible alternatives to group work. Could they work in a smaller group or have extra one-to-one support?
- If an alternative does not seem possible, point out gently to the student that others are being prevented from benefiting from the group because they are finding the behaviour disturbing. Discuss ways in which the behaviour could be modified.
- If things do not improve, then it might be necessary to invoke disciplinary procedures. You may have to insist that the student cease attending, but this should only be done as a last resort and having consulted the Disability Support Office for advice.

What if a student is returning after a prolonged absence due to mental health problems and seems to be having difficulty adjusting?

- A period of mental illness can leave someone feeling very vulnerable. They will be coping with this as well as trying to reintegrate with other students on their course. It could be a difficult time for them.
- Much will depend on whatever the student has chosen to disclose about their situation.
- Have regular conversations with them about how they are doing. It may be helpful to give them some extra tuition at first, if this is possible, to help them to schedule their work.
- It could be helpful for another student to be assigned as a “mentor” to help them cope with the timetable and ease them back into the social side of student life.
- Encourage the student to make an appointment with the Disability Support Office.

What if a member of my staff is returning after a prolonged absence due to mental health difficulties?

- Talk to the Equalities Manager about the situation, advice can then be given on possible adjustments to consider.
- Most importantly, talk to the individual and see what requirements, if any, they need. Try to encourage the individual to meet with the Equalities Manager to discuss their return to work.
- The Equalities Manager will encourage the individual to complete a Work Support Agreement to ensure that all staff working with that individual are aware of any necessary adjustments and support.

How do I know how involved to get and when to refer on?

- It is important to recognise the boundaries of your role, but at the same time to be open and accessible to students on a day-to-day basis.
- Being clear about how much time you have available can be helpful, not only for you, but for the person you are supporting.
- If possible always arrange a follow-up meeting with someone you are supporting, even if it's a couple of weeks away and only for ten minutes. This will be reassuring to the individual and also for you as a tutor or member of staff.

- If you feel in any doubt about the level of involvement that is developing, then talk with a colleague about it or your line manager. There may be a need to refer a student on to the Disability Support Office or a staff member on to the Equalities Manager, with their agreement.
- Share your anxieties. There are ways of discussing things which don't involve breaking confidences.
- There may come a time when, for the other person's safety, it is necessary to pass information on. If it is a life-threatening situation, this would not be classed as "breaking confidentiality".

What do I do if someone goes missing?

- If you have established that someone indeed has gone missing then this is a matter for the police. Report it to the Academic Registrar or Security who will take the necessary action.

When do I inform a student's parents?

- If a student is hospitalised and their life is in danger, even though they may not want their parents to know and they may be over 18, the hospital may well choose to let the parents have details. It is the hospital's responsibility to make this decision, not the Institute's.
- Similarly, if a student puts their life seriously in danger, for instance by attempting suicide, the medical profession could pass this information on, but not the Institute, unless the student gives their permission.
- Otherwise, if there is information you feel the parents ought to have, the student's permission always needs to be gained. If the student cannot be persuaded that this is appropriate, then the information should not be passed on. You might like to consider using the student's emergency contact number that is provided when the student starts at the Institute for making contact with the student's permission.

Appendix 2

Contacts

Disability Co-ordinator (student issues)

Sarah Slater
s.slater@ioe.ac.uk
0207 612 6604

Equalities Manager (staff issues)

Katie Edwards
k.edwards@ioe.ac.uk
0207 612 6321

Institute Emergency number (Security)

0207 612 5555

Institute Main reception

0207 512 6136

Gower Street Practice

20 Gower Street, London WC1E 6DP
020 7636 7628

All students are eligible to use the Gower Street Practice. This is a NHS General Practice, independent and separate from the Institute. Information is never disclosed to a third party, including to the Institute, without the patients' permission. The GP will refer students to a member of their counselling service, although this may take up to 3 weeks.

Only Connect Staff Counselling Service - For an appointment please telephone: 020 7911 5000 ext 3261.

Any member of staff may contact Only Connect to make an appointment to meet a counsellor. Only Connect is operated through the University of Westminster. The assessment interview and up to four counseling sessions will be free of charge. The service is based at the University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Rd, NW1.

Samaritans - 08457 90 90 90

The Samaritans provides confidential non-judgmental emotional support, 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.