

# **De Montfort University Kazakhstan**

## **Student Well Being Policy**

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## **1. The Purpose of this Policy**

- 1.1 This policy sets out DMUK's approach to student mental wellbeing.
- 1.2 It encourages a proportionate and empowering approach to student mental wellbeing.
- 1.3 It articulates DMUK's responsibilities in relation to student mental wellbeing, and the appropriate boundaries to set around this.
- 1.4 The policy will be backed by an annual implementation plan which will be overseen by Operational Leadership Group.

## **2. Related Policies**

- 2.1 The Students at Risk Policy sets out the appropriate approach to situations which suggest there could be significant and urgent concerns in relation to a student's wellbeing.
- 2.2 The Student Disability Policy outlines some key considerations in relation to fulfilling our disability related duties under the Equality Act, including how these relate to mental health conditions.
- 2.3 The General Regulations and Procedures affecting students are also relevant, especially in the event of a student who has a mental health condition experiencing significant difficulties in engaging with their program of study, or other essential aspects of university life.

## **3. The Healthy DMUK Philosophy**

- 3.1 Healthy DMUK is our university wide approach to student health and wellbeing, which recognises that mental wellbeing is of relevance to all, and aims to establish DMUK as a health promoting university.
- 3.2 Healthy DMUK is informed by a social model of wellbeing; student's experience of mental wellbeing, and the opportunities and challenges that they face are directly related to the environment in which they live, and the attitudes of people they encounter.
- 3.3 Healthy DMUK aims to reduce wellbeing barriers to students succeeding, and recognises that such an approach needs to be rooted in an understanding that the way individuals and communities conceptualise their own wellbeing varies considerably.
- 3.4 Healthy DMUK aims to establish a pro-active approach to mental wellbeing, which maintains the provision of good quality professional services, but also encourages staff within the wider university to consider how they can contribute towards establishing an environment which is likely to be health promoting.
- 3.5 Healthy DMUK recognises that mental health and physical wellbeing are intrinsically linked, and as such it is important that DMUK fosters a culture which makes healthy choices easy choices, in relation to issues such as alcohol, exercise, and the type of food available on campus.

#### **4. DMUK Responsibilities**

- 4.1 DMUK's approach will be heavily guided by the Equality Act Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education, and as such our primary duty is to make our provisions as accessible as possible through anticipatory and individual reasonable adjustments.
- 4.2 As an adult learning environment we respect the privacy and autonomy of our students, and recognise that information in relation to an individual student's wellbeing, belongs to the student and needs to be handled with particular care, in line with the requirements of the GDPR.
- 4.3 DMUK will take discrimination on the grounds of mental health as seriously as discrimination on any other grounds. Any issues arising in relation to this should be dealt with robustly through the appropriate HR and student policies.
- 4.4 We will seek to make information readily available to students in relation to support which DMUK can provide, but will respect the fact that as adults our students have the right to make decisions about their own wellbeing and support which they choose to access.
- 4.5 Our relationship is primarily with our students, and we will only communicate with third parties, in general where a student provides their explicit consent to do so. Exceptions to this are covered in the Students at Risk policy and may arise under the Data protection Act 2018.
- 4.6 DMUK recognises that tackling discrimination on the grounds of mental health involves considering structural barriers to students progressing, and as part of our annual action plan we will ensure that we enact plans to reduce these barriers, including for example cross institution commitments to facilitating students to get easy access to relevant information, for example in relation to the Disabled Student Allowance.
- 4.7 DMUK will aim to communicate about mental health in a manner which is respectful and empowering, it will avoid using discriminatory language in its communications, and ensure its coverage of related issues is balanced and unsensational. It will avoid communicating about people who have mental health conditions as victims, and whilst recognising individual achievements will avoid patronising narratives of people overcoming mental health conditions.
- 4.8 DMUK will develop a suite of training which will be made available to staff in relation to Healthy DMUK, and student wellbeing more generally. Staff members will be encouraged to access these resources and consider how this can influence their practice.
- 4.9 DMUK will keep the DMUK staff toolkit up to date, to ensure relevant information is available to staff in relation to student wellbeing.

#### **5. Staff responsibilities**

- 5.1 All DMUK staff can contribute to promoting positive student mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing is relevant to all students, and most of what we can do as an institution to create an inclusive environment does not require specialist knowledge.

- 5.2 Assisting students to develop as independent learners, and the associated skills and confidence which stem from these achievements are the greatest contribution which a university can make to the mental wellbeing of society.
- 5.3 Unless they are employed in a mental health specific role, no member of staff will be expected to have specialist knowledge of mental health.
- 5.4 For those members of staff who do not as part of their role have intense contact with students, attitudinal approaches which normalise mental health as an issue can be very valuable.
- 5.5 Members of staff who have more intensive contact with students are likely to benefit from familiarising themselves with the DMUK staff toolkit. Understanding what is available to students and being able to signpost appropriately, is likely to assist members of staff to be more effective in their substantive roles.
- 5.6 Providing a supportive and inclusive approach in relation to mental health does require members of staff to be mindful of maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Student facing roles by their nature do require a degree of flexibility, but it is particularly important in relation to mental health that staff members do not feel pressurised into stepping outside the nature of their substantive roles.
- 5.7 Depending on the nature of the role, some staff may be in a position to influence how inclusive an activity is. Being aware that issues such as anxiety, concentration difficulties, and memory can act as potential barriers for many people, and factoring this in to the way activities are structured can be very useful.
- 5.8 Universal Design for Learning is a good example of putting such principles into practice, and helps establish the university as one which promotes inclusion, and as a preventative factor in relation to mental wellbeing. The work that academics do in this area can have a major positive impact on student wellbeing, without requiring specialist knowledge.
- 5.9 All staff in student facing roles will come into contact with students who are experiencing mental distress. It isn't generally helpful for non-specialist staff to suggest a student 'should' access a particular form of specialist support, but being able to inform students how to make a Single Point of Access appointment, where the specific form of intervention can be assessed will be helpful.
- 5.10 All staff members in roles which entail significant student contact, can contribute towards creating a mentally inclusive environment by maintaining a general knowledge of the range of facilities which are available throughout DMUK, which can contribute towards positive mental wellbeing including DSU societies, DMUK Local, Sports and Exercise. The Healthy DMUK hub can provide a useful way of appraising students of these opportunities, and staff members are encouraged to consider opportunities they may have to promote this to students.
- 5.11 Many student facing roles will involve providing a level of support to students at a local level. This should always be appropriately bounded, and non-specialist staff are encouraged to

make use of the information contained in the Healthy DMUK Toolkit to structure such support.

- 5.12 For their own benefit and that of DMUK, staff should draw boundaries which are appropriate to the role in which they are employed, even if they happen to possess abilities which go beyond their roles.

## **6. Sources of Support Within DMUK**

- 6.1 DMUK's approach will aim to provide students with the opportunities to meet their full potential; it will do this by providing accessible and inclusive education through its Universal Design for Learning approach, and by providing services and approaches which support students in undertaking their education.
- 6.2 DMUK will also provide a range of services aimed to support students in connection with their wellbeing.
- 6.3 DMUK's approach will be appropriately bounded and reflect its role as an education provider. Its role will not extend to providing any form of medical treatment, nor contributing to the cost of any treatments. DMUK's role as an education provider will not extend to emergency interventions. (In the event this is required the SAR policy should be consulted).
- 6.4 Students will be encouraged to make use of the opportunities available including Healthy DMUK masterclasses to build their own skills in relation to managing their mental wellbeing.
- 6.5 Where students need more specialist support this will generally be assessed by offering a Single Point of Access (SPA) appointment. This will involve an assessment of need, and a recognition that there is not a one size fits all approach which will benefit all students.
- 6.6 The university aims to provide to students the most appropriate level of interventions, based on assessed needs.
- 6.7 All support is aimed at assisting students in accessing their education, and is not intended as a treatment for any medical conditions.
- 6.8 Where a student is identified as having an ongoing mental health condition either through their application to the university or subsequently they will usually be encouraged to consider additional external support.
- 6.9 If a student has an ongoing mental health condition they may well be classed as disabled, and the Student Disability Policy should be followed.

## **7. Student Responsibilities and Expectations**

- 7.1 Students do have a responsibility to consider their own wellbeing and how they can most effectively develop their skills and make use of the resources available to them.

- 7.2 DMUK is best able to support students when they declare mental health conditions at application stage.
- 7.3 If a student develops a mental health condition during their studies they should be encouraged to declare their condition to DMUK..
- 7.4 If a student declares a mental health condition at a later point DMUK will seek to offer support, but it is likely that the student will experience delays in support being provided.
- 7.5 It is important for students to understand that specialist support in relation to mental health conditions goes beyond what a university is expected to directly provide.
- 7.6 Students should take reasonable steps to ensure that they are safe in their accommodation. Most student accommodation with Almaty is private provision and DMUK does not have any power over their approaches to mental wellbeing issues, students should therefore satisfy themselves that the provider has appropriate approaches in place in relation to student mental wellbeing.

## **8. Duty of Care, Privacy and Empowerment**

- 8.1 There is no specific 'duty of care' legislation, and it is important to understand that DMUK's responsibilities and powers in relation to mental wellbeing do not extend to loco parentis, and do not include a pro-active duty to monitor individuals' health conditions.
- 8.2 DMUK does have a responsibility not to injure those who it might reasonably be foreseen would be harmed by careless acts of omissions, and it is therefore extremely important that staff keep themselves apprised of our policies and procedures.
- 8.3 Extending DMUK's remit into areas where it has little or no jurisdiction is likely to infringe on our student's rights to privacy. Whilst it is appropriate to raise concerns where issues around a student's wellbeing come to light it is important to be mindful that we are not in a position to ensure that students do not experience negative mental health.
- 8.4 Developing resilience does necessitate undertaking risks, it is neither desirable nor possible to protect adults from all risks, and an empowering approach to mental health does require accepting that students should (except in extreme circumstances) maintain as much control as possible over decisions in relation to their own wellbeing.

## **9. Role of DMUK and relationship to external health agencies**

- 9.1 In the event that there are serious concerns in relation to a student's health the Students at Risk policy should be followed.
- 9.2 With a student's permission we may on occasions liaise with external agencies such as GP practices. Whilst we may pass observations to relevant external partners it is not our role to evaluate the quality of what is provided. Decisions in relation to what health interventions are appropriate are generally best undertaken by individuals in consultation with their health care provider.