

Glasgow Caledonian University & GCU Students' Association

Student Mental Health Agreement 2020-2022

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Introduction and Background

GCU Students' Association and Glasgow Caledonian University have continued to build upon their partnership approach to enhancing student support, and in 2017 established a comprehensive and coordinated Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) through enrolling and participating in NUS Scotland Think Positive about Student Mental Health's Student Mental Health Agreement project.

As part of drawing up the SMHA each year, both parties, led by the Students' Association full time officer with responsibility for Mental Health and Wellbeing, map current provision of services, look at trends and issues affecting students at GCU and in the wider student movement, and consult with student and university representatives. The impact of the previous year's Agreement is evaluated in order to ensure that there is a proactive momentum each year with the overall aim of empowering positive mental health and wellbeing for all students at GCU. Our whole institution approach is essential in achieving this and enhancing a culture of support, openness and inclusivity around mental health across our campuses.

In formulating this 2020-22 Agreement the Full Time Officers in the Students' Association with the policy area for Student Mental Health and Wellbeing, alongside GCU Students' Association Advice Centre Staff and the GCU Wellbeing Service have chosen a focus on 3 main themes: Rethink Mental Health; Be well to do Well; and Need Help? Here's how to get it.

Within these 3 overarching themes the Agreement sets out 8 working areas in which specific and measurable actions are grouped. These working areas are Campaigns, Strategic Approach; Events; Workshops; Supporting Specific Student Groups; Promotion of Services, Staff Support and Peer Support.

Theme 1: Re-Think Mental Health

GCU Students' Association and Glasgow Caledonian University believe it's important to promote a culture and community of acceptance and inclusivity for Mental Health.

Therefore, we are developing various projects to challenge mental health stigma, and increase the visibility of mental health at GCU, alongside looking at unique ways to enhance wellbeing across our community.

By doing this we aim to encourage everyone at GCU to "Re-think Mental Health" as something that we all have, that we should all prioritise and that we can all play a role in improving as part of a whole institution approach that includes all staff and students.

Working Areas 1 – Campaigns

We will focus on regular campaigns and activities to nurture and continually reinforce a positive message and culture of acceptance and inclusivity around mental health. We will aim to uncover any remaining stigma surrounding mental health on campus and to counter this in a positive way with accurate information and reassurance.

- **Exam Stress Campaigns**
GCU Students' Association will continue to run a campaign around exam stress, how to deal with this with a focus of the increased impact of isolation during remote learning. This will run prior to/during each exam diet.

[Success measures: Engagement with information, resources and freebies from on campus stalls where applicable; feedback from social media; statistics for advice centre]

- **Mental Health Awareness Week Campaign – May 2021 and 2022**
Mental Health Awareness Week on the 10th – 16th of May 2021 will focus on the theme of Nature and Environment from the [Mental Health Foundation](#). GCU and GCU Students' Association will host a range of activities to engage staff and students in their health and wellbeing online.

Mental Health Awareness Week on the 9th – 15th of May 2022 will focus on the theme of Loneliness. GCU and GCU Students' Association will host a range of activities to engage staff and students in their health and wellbeing online.

[success measures: plan activities and events aligning to theme of the week; promote events; events occur]

- **Here to Help Campaign (Launching 2020-21)**
We recognise the growing need to continue to support our students and staff, and to take a holistic community approach to this work. We are committed to taking a proactive approach to support all our students and staff to achieve their optimal mental health, wellbeing and resilience, to thrive in and outside the University,

realise their full potential and transform the health and wellbeing of our wider communities for the common good.

Various initiatives have taken place across the institution to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community at GCU, and we are working on a campaign to not only help communicate these support structures but breaking down the barriers to accessing these services.

[Success Measures: Co-Produce Designs and Messages for Campaign, Campaign is consulted on with wider GCU Community, Experts and Key Stakeholders, Campaign is funded and approved for distribution across the campus.]

- **Keep in Touch** campaign
The University are aiming to launch in 2021 a Keep in Touch campaign in which the University Student Support directorate will work to contact all students currently studying at Glasgow Caledonian University to inform them of available support and provide an informal check in opportunity.

[Success Measures: Campaign is launched, students are contacted, awareness of services and access of provisions increase]

Working Area 2 - Strategic approach

The need to implement a strategic approach is outlined by many across the sector, including [UUK in their Step Change Framework for Student Mental Health](#), [Student Minds](#), and indeed, Think Positive about Student Mental Health in this project for [Student Mental Health Agreements](#).

Therefore, throughout this and following academic years we are aiming to enhance not only ongoing strategic projects and strategies but introduce new innovative projects for student and staff mental health.

- **UUK Suicide Safer Universities Framework**
GCU in partnership with GCU Students' Association are working to evaluate our support provisions and procedures against the UUK Suicide Safer Universities Framework, and enhance our procedures, policies, and provision through the development of a Glasgow Caledonian University Suicide Prevention and Response Framework.

[Success Measures: provisions are mapped against UUK framework, action plan is developed and undertaken, consultation with wider GCU Community on actions, policies and procedures, outcomes are embedded into practise]

- **Engage with Student Minds University Mental Health Charter Pilot and Award Programme**
To further enhance and evaluate our support provisions for GCU students and staff and build upon existing projects. We are aiming to engage with both the pilot and full charter programme of the University Mental Health Charter with Student Minds.

[Success Measures: Apply for pilot, undertake self-evaluation and focus groups, outcomes are embedded into areas of work and evaluated, provisions enhanced]

- **Enhancing the Student Wellbeing Service**
The Student Wellbeing Service plan to further enhance and develop their team by embedding an additional two Student Wellbeing Adviser roles to allow for the allocation of one Adviser per Academic School. This will allow the Advisers to undertake a proactive approach of engagement with the academic schools, and undertake contextualised work on different wellbeing campaigns, resources, and more.

[Success Measures: Roles are advertised; position are filled; campaigns, training, and other resources are offered and evaluated]

• **Mentally Healthy**

Universities

To enhance and further embed the whole institutional approach GCU undertakes in regards to enhancing our staff and student wellbeing, we have appointed an embedded worker from SAMH. The Mentally Healthy Universities Coordinator will undertake a range of projects to enhance staff wellbeing and deliver training for GCU staff on health and wellbeing.

[Success Measures: Role is advertised; position is filled; training is offered and evaluated]

Coordinator

• **Redevelop the Student Mental Health Action Plan**

In 2017, GCU introduced the development of a Student Mental Health Action Plan. We aim to continue to enhance this action plan and further develop the ongoing work to support staff and student mental health. The action plan is overseen by our Student Wellbeing Advisory Group – see below.

[Success measures: Additional actions are added into the SMHAP; actions are implemented, and evaluated; impact of the Action Plan is evaluated]

• **Continue meetings of the Student Wellbeing Advisory Group**

The Student Wellbeing Advisory Group is a cross institutional working group and was formed in 2019 (formally the Student Mental Health Task Group) to continue working to support student mental health and wellbeing. The group features representation from across the GCU Community, including academics, GCU London, GCU Students' Association and GCU London Students' Association, and SAMH.

[Success Measures: group continues to run with representation from key individuals across the University and Local Community]

• **Establish a Health and Wellbeing Framework for GCU students and staff**

GCU's are exploring the development and establishment of an overarching Health and Wellbeing Framework for our staff and students which builds upon our current approaches

and further aligns us to the UUK Step Change strategic framework. The framework aims to comprise of 4 key work streams to enhance staff and student experience and support, these being Healthy Study, Healthy Work, Community Wellbeing and Wellbeing Support.

[Success Measures: framework is drafted and considered by stakeholders; framework draft is approved; work streams are established and leads appointed]

Theme 2: Be Well to Do Well

An essential foundation to the student academic experience is student mental health and wellbeing. We aim to further enhance a culture across campus that prioritises mental health and wellbeing, and how the Students' Association in partnership with the University can support students and help them to become proactive in supporting their own wellbeing and to learn new coping skills and mechanisms.

Working Area 3 - Events

Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association will host a number of events to ensure that a practice of continually monitoring and investing in your individual mental health and wellbeing is supported as an integral part of being at GCU. To ensure accessibility for all, the events will include a variety of delivery platforms (online and offline), and of length and times (evening, lunchtime, bookable free sessions, and day long drop-ins etc.).

- **Mindful** **Mondays**
The Students' Association Full Time Officer Mental Health and Wellbeing lead will continue to offer a social media campaign sharing mental health and wellbeing tips and resources every week (on Mondays!).

[success measures: posts made each week; number of views, shares; evidence of engagement and student feedback]

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Freshers' Events**
We will deliver online workshop events during our GCU Students' Association Fresher's Week Program. Through this we will also aim to establish awareness of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer role, group, and their campaigns.

- **Feel** **Fab** **Feb**
We will host a month of mental health and wellbeing themed events and activities organised and curated by the Students' Association throughout February to chase away those post-exam new year blues. Back, bigger and better for 2021 and 2022.

[success measures: full schedule of activities organised; participation number; student feedback]

- **World Mental Health Day event – October 10th, 2020 and 2021**
To celebrate World Mental Health Day, Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association will hold a range of activities, workshops and lectures for students and staff. Activities for the day will be hosted online and focus on a variety of ways that GCU students and staff can increase their knowledge and understanding of wellbeing and mental health, engage with self-care, learn more of the support available to them, and interact with live sessions.

Our Here to Help campaign will also be launched on World Mental Health Day in 2021.

[Success Measures: Event is planned in partnership between students and staff; Range of activities to enhance the holistic nature of mental health wellbeing; Information and self-care resources available on day; Pre-existing internal and external support services advertised on day; Event is evaluated; Improve students' and staff's awareness of support and promote a sense of belonging.]

- **University Mental Health Day events – Thursday 4th March 2021 & 2022**

To celebrate University Mental Health Day Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association will hold a range of activities, workshops and lectures for students and staff on University Mental Health Day.
<https://www.unimentalhealthday.co.uk/>

A range of activities will be held on 3rd March 2022 for University Mental Health Day.

[Success Measures: Event is planned in partnership between students and staff; Range of activities to enhance the holistic nature of mental health wellbeing are provided; Information and self-care resources available on day; pre-existing internal and external support services advertised on day; events are evaluated; positive student and staff engagement and feedback]

Working Area 4 - Workshops

We are aiming to increase the mental health literacy, knowledge and understanding of our students and staff on what support GCU and GCU Students' Association provide for mental wellbeing and challenge mental health stigma through a series of workshops for our community.

- **Continue to offer free mindfulness courses for our Students**
GCU aim to continue offering free mindfulness sessions to GCU Students through our Student Wellbeing Team and to expand provision to offer sessions across both trimesters for our students following positive feedback in previous years. In response to online working from the Covid-19 pandemic, Mindfulness courses will be offered online.

[Success Measures: Student mindfulness provision is continued; provision is enhanced to be offered across both Trimester A and B.]

- **Continue to offer the Mental Health Matters Workshop at inductions**
The GCU Disability Team will deliver a one-day programme for applicants who experience mental health difficulties or long-term mental illness, with the aim of providing a smoother transition from school/college to university, address anxieties around starting university and to explore the support available at GCU. The workshop will also look at self-care and how to look after your mental health whilst at university. In response to online working from the Covid-19 pandemic, Mental Health Matters courses will be offered online.

[Success Measures: Mental Health Matters workshop is designed; Workshop is delivered at induction; Workshop is evaluated, enhanced, and embedded for future years]

- **Continue to develop and deliver our Summer Transitions workshops**
The Disability Team, in partnership with the National Autistic Society (Scotland), deliver a [Summer Transition Programme](#) for applicants with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum (or Asperger's syndrome). This year we aim to continue to develop and provide this workshop for incoming GCU Students remotely.

[Success Measures: Workshop feedback from previous years is incorporated; Workshop is offered again before Tri A 2019/20; workshop is evaluated.]

- **Look After Your Mate Workshops** – See section 8
- **Introduce Suicide Alertness Training Sessions for students and staff with SAMH**
GCU's Mentally Healthy Coordinator will deliver Suicide Alertness Training sessions to the GCU student and staff community throughout the academic terms.

[Success Measures: Workshop is rolled out to GCU students and staff; workshop is evaluated]

- **Introduce Mind Your Mate (suicide prevention) workshops for students**
GCU Students' Association successfully obtained [funding](#) from the National Lottery to offer Mind Your Mate (suicide prevention) and Emotional Resilience workshops to GCU Students throughout 2021/22. Four online sessions were delivered in Trimester A and four online sessions will be delivered for Trimester B.

[Success Measures: Workshop is rolled out to GCU students; workshop is evaluated]

- **Introduce Emotional Resilience workshops for students**
GCU Students' Association successfully obtained [funding](#) from the National Lottery to offer Mind Your Mate (suicide prevention) and Emotional Resilience workshops to GCU Students throughout 2021/22.

[Success Measures: Workshop is rolled out to GCU students; workshop is evaluated]

- **Offer Wellbeing Sessions**
GCU Students' Association will host three Wellbeing sessions (improving motivation, sleep hygiene etc) throughout the academic trimester.

[Success Measures: Sessions are rolled out to GCU students and staff]

- **Offer GRIT workshops for GCU Students and Staff**
GCU were successful in obtaining funding from the National Lottery to also offer GRIT workshops for students and staff to enhance mental health and wellbeing. The GCU Careers Service will roll these workshops out to students and staff.

[Success Measures: Workshop is rolled out to GCU students and staff; workshop is evaluated]

Working Area 5 - Supporting specific student groups

When identifying how we support our students, we adopt an approach which considers everyone in our GCU Community, valuing the diversity of our members, and ensuring our provisions are accessible across the variety of specific and intersectional experiences that our students may encounter. GCU have recently established a [specific webpage](#) which outlines the work we undertake to support our students; this includes our links and partnership work with external organisations and GCU Students' Association. In this Agreement, we aim to undertake a range of actions to support all our students with their wellbeing.

- **QAA Scotland Collaborative Cluster on Supporting the Mental Wellbeing of our BAME and LGBTQ+ Student Communities**

GCU aim to work with colleagues across the higher education sector, including SPARQs, Think Positive about Student Mental Health and others to form a collaborative cluster with the Quality Assurance Agency. The cluster aims to deliver four professional development webinars between February and May for Higher Education staff and conduct qualitative research to collect the views of students on the barriers and facilitators they have experienced in relation to the curriculum and their mental wellbeing.

[Success Measures: Application is submitted and successfully approved to form a Cluster with the QAA; Call to other institutions for involvement is circulated; Team is established; Cluster undertakes and publishes work]

- **Parents and Carers Resources**

To enhance support for parents and carers and build upon the booklet launched in 2020 and 2021, the student wellbeing team will develop and deliver a series of online webinars and online resource.

[Success Measures: Webinars are developed and delivered, online resource is developed and launched]

Theme 3 - Need Help? Here's How to Get it

In their 2018 report, "Being well, doing well", Alterline highlighted that whilst many students responding to their survey were aware of support available to them on campus, anxiety concerning initial contact was a barrier for a considerable number of students to accessing when their mental health was suffering. Considering this evidence, in addition to raising awareness of the existing mental health support at GCU, we want to put in place interventions that can help to identify, address, and dismantle any barriers that students and staff may face when accessing mental health support.

Working Area 6 - Promotion of Student Services

As well as implementing new activities and areas of work we recognise the importance of continually raising awareness of the existing mental health support available at GCU.

- **Promotion of GCU Students' Association Advice Centre, Nightline and GCU Wellbeing Team Services**

To ensure a high awareness of mental health, advice and wellbeing services amongst staff and students we undertake ongoing promotion of GCU Students' Association and GCU Wellbeing team services via social media, fortnightly all student emails (GCU and GCU Students' Association alternately); screen ads around campus, and Fresher's/Refresher's campaigns and Nightline Awareness week face to face campaigns. We will continue to do this with a focus on promoting on Instagram in addition to FB and Twitter and using stories on Instagram/Facebook to ensure more reach.

[Success measures: all regular communications completed for Advice Centre, Nightline, and wellbeing services; numbers accessing services; Wellbeing newsletter established and published weekly; webpages redeveloped; blogs published throughout the year on support available; social media posts by GCU and GCU Students' Association on wellbeing info]

- **Continue to be involved in Student Services Fairs**

Each academic year to enhance staff and student awareness of support provided by GCU and GCU Students' Association, GCU host a student services fair. This year we aim to continue our involvement in the student services fair.

[Success measures: Student Support resources available at the Student Services fair; Student and staff awareness increases of available support]

- **Continue the Student Wellbeing Newsletter within the GCU Wellbeing Service**

To help increase awareness and engagement by staff and students of

the available wellbeing resources from the GCU Wellbeing Team, self-care resources, and more, we are aiming to develop and launch a two-weekly wellbeing newsletter from the GCU Wellbeing Service.

[Success Measures: Newsletter is created and launched to GCU Students, over 100 sign ups to the newsletter].

- **Introduce and continue to develop an online platform for student Wellbeing**

To help increase awareness and engagement by staff and students of the available wellbeing resources from the GCU Wellbeing Team, self-care resources, and more, and in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, the GCU Student Wellbeing team have developed and launched an online platform on our VLE for wellbeing.

[Success Measures: Platform is launched, events held on the platform, students self-enrol].

- **Introduce Togetherall**

We aim to invest in and introduced the support platform Togetherall in August 2020 for GCU students and staff to provide holistic wellbeing support.

[Success Measures: Service is introduced for students and staff]

- **Report and Support**

We are aiming to develop and introduce a contextualised support platform for students to seek support for, and report incidences of misconduct they experience on campus. We aim to launch this platform with resources from the GCU Students' Association encouraging student awareness of this

[Success Measures: Service is introduced for, and communicated too students]

Working Area 7 - Staff support

To truly achieve a positive and inclusive mental health culture on campus it is imperative that we also ensure provision to support the wellbeing of staff. We do this by promoting a positive environment to work and study, signposting staff to information and training available to them as well as guidance and practical tips on how staff and students can support themselves and others.

- **Identifying and Supporting Students in Distress Handbook**

The GCU Wellbeing Team will redevelop their resources to help staff identify and support students in distress within the context of remote learning. The aim is to combine existing resources into one handbook which is easily accessible to GCU Staff and enhance awareness of how to support GCU Students. The information will also be contextualised to GCU Support Sources.

[Success Measures: Flowchart and documents are combined into one handbook; Handbook is designed, printed, and made available to GCU Staff online and physically; Awareness of support available in the staff community is increased]

- **Introduce an Emergency Intervention and Response Team**

We are also aiming to introduce an emergency intervention response team to support staff who are helping students in distress. The team will be staffed by members of the Student Wellbeing Service.

[Success Measures; team is established and communicated to wider staff at GCU]

Working Area 8 - Peer Support

Isolation and loneliness can have significant impacts on mental health and wellbeing, with research showing that this can indeed be one of the most [significant indications](#) of mental distress within student communities. More so than ever in the light of the pandemic, GCU and GCU Students' Association are working to establish new peer support networks for GCU students to reduce these factors and enhance their health and wellbeing.

- **Start work towards creating large scale Peer to Peer Support network (to launch 2022-23)**

GCU Students' Association will develop a project and apply for lottery funding for a roll out over several years of "Mind your Mate" training to create a large-scale Peer to Peer support network at GCU. Research (including that undertaken in 2018 by Alterline, mentioned above) shows that peer support is something that many students feel more comfortable using as a first step to getting help.

[Success Measures: research and scope out potential shape of project; apply for lottery funding; achieve funding to roll out project from 2022-23]

- **Continue to provide Nightline peer listening and info service 7am-7pm Mon-Friday during term time.**

Glasgow Students' Nightline is a confidential telephone, text, and online listening and information service run by trained students' volunteers for the students of Glasgow Caledonian, Strathclyde, and Glasgow Universities. Nightline is open from 7pm to 7am, Monday to Friday during term time.

GCU Students' Association are aiming to continue this service, and work towards collaborating with Glasgow University Nightline Service to provide a Glasgow wide provision for students.

[Success Measures: Nightline Service is offered to students; Glasgow wide service is investigated]

- **Re-Introduce Look After your Mate workshops**

Members of the Student Wellbeing Team will attend training with Student Minds to deliver the [Look After Your Mate workshops](#) to GCU Students. The workshops aim to enhance peer support and community building within the student body, and further educate students on mental health and wellbeing, alongside local and national mental health support available.

[Success Measures: Members of the team are trained; Workshop is rolled out to GCU students, workshop is evaluated.]