



STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT



North East Scotland College's (NESCol) Wellbeing Strategy sets out strategic direction across the next three years. NESCol understands the challenges faced by people living with mental, physical and social health issues and the impact this can have on their personal, working and academic lives. A Wellbeing Matters group consisting of support, teaching and student body representatives including representatives from the Students' Association, has been established in order to develop and drive forward a range of initiatives that link to the Wellbeing Strategy, including the Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA). The College is committed to making a positive difference to the lives of all students so they are able to experience positive mental, physical and social health and achieve their full potential as successful and confident individuals. The College and Students' Association hopes that this agreement continues to offer and develop mental health and wellbeing services to students as well as encourage student feedback on these services.



1. To hold mental health and wellbeing events and activities throughout the year to increase coping strategies and challenge stigma.

We will continue to work in partnership with the College, students, the Students' Association and our external partners to deliver events that are relevant to our staff and student demographic and to encourage staff and students to engage in these activities. The new NESCol Events Calendar features a 'Spotlight On' for each month throughout the year and aims to coordinate events and activities to support all aspects of wellbeing. In addition, the Students' Association through its Calendar of events and activities and by participation in the Healthy Body; Healthy Mind awards aims to deliver targeted events to support the Wellbeing Strategy and ensure that both staff and students can participate fully in and feel able to contribute to and shape these activities.

Actions to be taken:

- Promote the NESCol Events Calendar and the 'Spotlight On' monthly themes to encourage engagement from staff and students which will raise awareness and promote support available.
- Enhance the main Calendar events offered by the Students' Association, creating a student friendly platform for activities – Freshers' week, Health and Wellbeing Fairs, TogetherNES Equality and Diversity Fairs, as well as a focus on the college's monthly themes to promote informative and fun events.
- Ensure that both staff and students are involved in informing what these events should look like using existing internal and external channels of communications e.g. RESPECT and Wellbeing Matters groups.
- Tie in to the NESCol Events Calendar where possible and publish the Students' Association our calendar at the beginning of an academic year and in monthly segments
- Contact organisations and individuals who will be able to support these events and activities and maintain records in line with GDPR.
- Ensure that feedback is captured and activities are evaluated to inform future events by both staff and students.
- Through the Partnership Agreement, SEAG (Student Engagement Action Group) and Wellbeing Matters Action Group ensure that mechanisms are in place for the College to support the Students' Association and other teams in the delivery of their events and promote student engagement in these.

2. To promote support services available to students in a variety of ways throughout the year.

The Academic Tutoring role and Student Advice and Support Team play a crucial role in helping to deliver a positive student experience. The Academic Tutor role (over 300 in place) provides the opportunity for effective relationships and trust to be built between staff and students, and signposting to online resources available through MyNESCol and where required to relevant external support agencies. Additionally, the Wellbeing Matters Action Group will continue to work in partnership with Third Sector organisations. The Students' Association should be informed of support services available so they are able to effectively signpost students to sources of support both on and off campus. The Students' Association will develop networks to enable them to deliver robust events and activities. Additionally, students should also be given the opportunity to give feedback on the Student Wellbeing Strategy and the services that are in place to support this.

Actions to be taken:

- Ensure all Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) students are made aware of their allocated Academic Tutors and have an explicit and ring-fenced weekly Academic Tutoring or Academic and Personal Skills Development session on their timetable. All students are entitled to one-to-one progress meetings each block with their Academic Tutor, in addition to group contact.
- To continue to advertise the Student Advice Centres and other support services and what they do via all promoting channels e.g. posters, plasma screens, student portal, inductions, academic tutoring slots, social media, Freshers, bi-weekly email etc. being cognisant of the periods of the academic year when these services may be in greater demand i.e. exams, festive periods.
- Continue to develop the Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit available on MyNESCol and in the Academic and Personal Skills Development Unit, as well as track who is accessing the Toolkit and its features such as Togetherall, so targeted support can be arranged as required.
- Continue to ensure all staff are fully aware of the College's Mental Health First Aid guidelines and Safeguarding procedures/ policy via mandatory staff training and the staff intranet, COLin.
- Ensure Students' Association / students are represented and involved in shaping services and materials and have the ability to feedback on the same e.g. including more general feedback forms on the bi-weekly email.
- Continue to utilise the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing and Student Counselling funding from the Scottish Funding Council to develop and enhance the counselling service and support available via the Student Advice and Support Team.

3. Provide training opportunities for staff and students in order to increase the ability to identify and provide support for those with mental health concerns e.g Mindfulness workshops, Meditation/Yoga and Stress workshops

NESCol has a clear staff development programme running from the start of the Academic Session, further supplemented with training and continued professional development opportunities throughout the year. Through the NESCol Events Calendar and working in partnership with the People Services team, there will be opportunities for students and staff to attend training and awareness raising sessions together. This should further include a commitment to resilience building in students and developing structures that promote and enable students to disclose issues in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

Actions to be taken:

- To ensure key members of staff and student representatives have been provided MHFA training.
- Mandatory Mental Health awareness workshops delivered to all college staff and students
- Create student friendly workshops that focus on developing coping strategies for mental health concerns such as Mindfulness workshops, Meditation/Yoga, Stress workshops
- Deliver ASIST Training for key members of staff.
- Further develop the online student support referral system including safeguarding referrals and ensure through staff inductions that all staff are aware of these processes.
- Students' Association contributes by ensuring students are aware of and are able to access training opportunities i.e. through Class Rep system
- Allow the opportunity for students and staff to provide feedback on these workshops and discuss other opportunities they would like to see in the future

4. Work with our third sector partners to continue to provide information sessions and webinars to support positive mental health and wellbeing.

The College continues to review its services and enhances them where there is a need identified. In addition to the support services already offered by the College we acknowledge that there are a wide range of services and mental health support organisations, predominantly in the third sector, who are well placed to provide additional support to both staff and students. The College and Students' Association will continue to explore, develop and nurture those partnerships.

Actions to be taken:

- Engage in talks with the Third Sector which covers the two main council areas, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.
 - Engage in talks with the local NHS board.
 - NESCol and Students' Association maintain, in line with GDPR, a database of organisations who can support the events, activities and training aims of the Wellbeing Strategy.
 - Engage with Think Positive events to learn from and contribute to good practice sharing with participating institutions.
 - Achieve Healthy Body Healthy Mind Bronze Award
 - Proactively engage in College Development Network groups to share best practice and build strong networks with other colleges and external organisations.
- 5. To identify student groups that require extra support and give them the opportunity to give feedback on support services available, highlight any barriers they may face and shape services.**

The College delivers across three campuses and covers a wide North East of Scotland geographic area. Each campus has its own identity but all have students who require additional support and encouragement. It is recognised that some student groups who require extra support may be more reluctant to seek support at an early stage where they experience mental health difficulties.

Actions to be taken:

- Ensure information on student support and mental health services is displayed across all campuses and is accessible to all in terms of format and language e.g. posters, plasma screens, MyNESCol, inductions, academic tutoring slots, social media.
- Engage with student groups who require extra support on an ongoing basis to determine the biggest issues they face and ways to address these
- Take steps and engage with BSL and non-English speakers to make sure that health/mental health services within the college are fully accessible to students – including making agreements and services available in BSL or other language, provide training to staff and involve RESPECT and ContactScotlandBSL
- Use feedback to shape the services available.

6. Ensure that the aims of the Agreement are made known to the whole student population including part time and distance learners and staff members.

It is essential that this be seen as a live, working document and, to that end, one the aims of which are delivered in partnership with both staff and students. In this way, both students and staff will see Mental Health as a priority.

Actions to be taken:

- Ensure the Student Mental Health Agreement is accessible to all students and staff and is promoted throughout the year i.e. student friendly version/BSL key point version.
- Wellbeing Matters group will ensure that the SMHA is a regular agenda item and will monitor and evaluate progress against actions. This action may also be carried out in conjunction with the Student Engagement Action Group (SEAG) who have responsibility for evaluating progress against the Partnership Agreement.
- Allow students to provide input on the agreement and what they would like to see added or changed in the future.

Signed by: _____



Neil Cowie
Principal and Chief Executive

Signed by: _____



Sasha Brydon
Regional President
Students' Association



CONTACT US!



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City Campus Office

Lower Ground Floor of the Tower Block on the Loch Street entrance to the building.

Altens Campus Office

Room FG26 in F Block

Fraserburgh Campus Office

Atrium area to the left of the coffee bar.



Student Advice and Support

Email: studentadvice@nescol.ac.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NESColAdvice

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City Campus Office

Lower Ground Floor of the Tower Block on the Loch Street entrance to the building, past Dinos Café.

Altens Campus Office

Room M112 in the Main Block

Fraserburgh Campus Office

Atrium area across from the Refectory



Think Positive

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