

Heriot-Watt University Student Mental Health Agreement 2022-2024

This agreement has been developed by Heriot-Watt University's Student Wellbeing Services and Heriot-Watt University Student Union. We have based the agreement on the 2022-23 [Student Partnership Agreement](#), so that it is in line with the goals across our 5 campuses worldwide and considers student feedback from across all campuses. The agreement identifies key projects and goals that the partners agree to collaborate on and develop in order to enhance the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Experience.

1. Increase targeted Wellbeing Activities

We aim to encourage and empower all student groups to engage with the wellbeing agenda, especially those that may feel underrepresented to increase their sense of belonging in our student community and tackle loneliness. Improved sense of belonging, especially for underrepresented students, can go a long way to improving not only wellbeing but academic performance as well.

Actions to be taken:

- Create a Global Wellbeing & Support Staff Forum to share best practice and emerging themes.
- Gather feedback from the student body via surveys such as our Big 6 to identify which student groups feel they are currently underrepresented.
- Enhance the existing suite of events and activities throughout the academic year, to support students from the identified underrepresented groups. This will include but is not limited to events for women & non-binary, parents & carers, care experienced and estranged, LGBT+, disabled students, and BME students.

Success measures: There will be an open and regular channel of communication between campuses and departments where we can all learn from each other's work, in order to deliver the best possible support for our students. Previously underrepresented groups of students will express feeling represented via anecdotal feedback and surveys and that there is sufficient support and activities on offer for them. Existing recurring events will have improved engagement in terms of numbers and interaction.

2. Improve Signposting and Promotion of Services

We aim to improve our signposting and promotion of existing and developing services that we offer across the University and the Student Union, right from when students first join us as ['students are most likely to have concerns about mental health at the start of their studies'](#).

Actions to be taken:

- Develop and clarify the existing support resources for each of our campuses, covering all aspects of Wellbeing.
- Work with students to review the content of Wellbeing Webpages and Sharepoint sites to ensure resources and services are easily signposted.
- Create links to related services i.e. Personal Tutoring, Student Union, Accommodation etc, University information systems
- Sharing updates on signposting via the Student Facing Staff Team chat and the Personal Tutor network.

- Continue to promote services on Student Union, Sports Union, and Wellbeing Services social media platform, especially during stressful times such as exams and results season.
- Continue to promote our mental health support offer on the [Think Positive Hub](#).

Success measures: Students will be more aware of where and how they can seek help, to maintain their wellbeing as well as when they have reached crisis point. Ideally, **all** students would be aware of the support available to them, even if they never have a need to use it. Similarly, staff will be more confident about responding to enquiries and signposting relevant services. A review/audit of the existing support resources and webpages is complete. Personal Tutors and academic staff will express confidence and comfortability in signposting to support services. We may see an increase in students accessing support if this is successful, but that shouldn't necessarily be considered as a negative thing.

3. 8 Pillars of Student Wellbeing

Following the structure of the 8 Pillars of Wellness, we will aim to dedicate and theme extra support and resources each month of the Academic Year to one of the 8 Pillars (Social, Environmental, Spiritual, Financial, Physical, Emotional, Intellectual/Academic, Occupational). We will also deliver global resources and events promoting the 8 Pillars theory. The 8 Pillars theory is an important tool to adequately equip students to take care of their own health and wellbeing.

Actions to be taken:

- Each month have at least 3 event/s (either Union-led, University-led, or collaborative) that pertain to that month's Pillar of Wellness.
- Each month, produce communications that pertain to that month's Pillar of Wellness.
- Incorporate the 8 Pillars into existing events/workshops where possible and demonstrate how students can use the model for self-help.
- Each month, dedicate a meeting to identify the work for the next month's pillar (i.e. identify the work that is already being done that 'covers' that pillar, and fill in the gaps.)
- Collect student feedback and gauge awareness of the 8 Pillars theory via Big 6 survey and similar.

Success measures: We will see an increase in the number of students attending the relevant events and more students will be aware of the 8 Pillars theory. Students and staff will understand the usefulness of the model and will apply it to events they put on, whether they are solely wellbeing-focused or otherwise.

4. Cost of Living Support

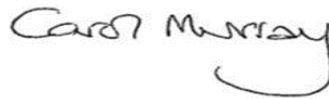
Students have a unique set of challenge to contend with that are only exacerbated by the ongoing cost-of-living and housing crises, negatively impacting their mental health and their ability to study. In our November 2022 Big 6 survey, 'How U Live', over 40% of students were struggling to find accommodation, with 5% still searching for a place to stay more than halfway through their first semester. To support our students with the rising cost of living, we will provide long-term financial wellbeing interventions that will build skills for life as well as developing, enhancing, and promoting short-term financial support that is available to students.

Actions to be taken:

- At least 1 online Financial Literacy webinar per academic year, preferably included in September and/or January induction.
- At least 1 stall per semester where students can come and speak to Student Success Advisors and/or Full Time Officers about finances and access helpful resources to help them manage their money.
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Signed by 

Georgia Anne Noble – Vice President Wellbeing – Heriot-Watt University Student Union



Signed by
Heriot Watt University

Head of Student Wellbeing Services,

Date: 25.4.23

This agreement will remain in place until a new iteration is created.

