

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a bouquet of colorful balloons in shades of purple, blue, green, and yellow.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT

ACTION PLAN: 2022-2024

GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY & GCU STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHED IN JUNE 2024

Find out more and be involved by contacting GCU Student Wellbeing at StudentWellbeing@GCU.ac.uk or the GCU Students' Association Advice Centre at advice@GCUstudents.co.uk

GCU Students' Association and Glasgow Caledonian University are committed to working in partnership to enhance student wellbeing. Our Student Mental Health Agreement, established in 2017, is an annual commitment to continuous development of provisions and services to empower positive mental health and wellbeing for all students at GCU. The Student Mental Health Agreement is a project for Universities, Colleges and Students' Associations which is supported by Think Positive about Student Mental Health at NUS Scotland.

Our Student Mental Health Agreement sits within a whole institution approach meaning that we understand that many aspects of a student's experiences may interconnect, and will impact upon their health and wellbeing. We work with students at GCU, GCU student representatives, university staff, charities, sector frameworks and research to shape our approach. You can find out more about ways of getting involved on Page 10. The Student Mental Health Agreement is overseen by the GCU Student Mental Health Agreement Working Group. More information about the group can be found on the next page. This group ensures the work of the agreement is connected with wider projects across GCU and GCU Students' Association and support the evaluation of the actions.

This document contains the Student Mental Health Agreement Action Plan for Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association for the Academic Years between 2022 – 2024.

If you have any questions please contact GCU Student Wellbeing at StudentWellbeing@GCU.ac.uk or the GCU Students' Association Advice Centre at advice@GCUstudents.co.uk

THE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT WORKING GROUP

The Student Mental Health Agreement documentation is supported by the Student Mental Health Agreement Working Group.
The group is made up of staff and students from both Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association.



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Our projects and contact details are published at:

<https://www.gcustudents.co.uk/advice-centre/wellbeing/student-mental-health-agreement>

and

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/currentstudents/support/wellbeing/informationaboutourservices/wellbeingprojects>

The background image shows a modern university campus. On the left, there's a brick building with a curved glass section. In the center, a tall blue building features the Glasgow Caledonian University logo. The foreground is filled with lush greenery, including a large bush and a bed of purple and yellow flowers.

AREAS OF WORK

Each year the Student Mental Health Agreement Working Group plan projects of work with students, staff, and guidance from the Higher Education sector. We collate these into themed areas to structure our action plan. These are:

- 01** Events and campaigns
- 02** Supporting our student communities
- 03** Mental health research, strategy & governance
- 04** Building mental health literacy
- 05** Supporting staff to support students

EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

Awareness of available support provisions, and student understandings of how to engage with these, are key influences on engagement of with mental health and wellbeing services. To help raise awareness of services available, how to access these, and address mental health stigma, we commit to hosting a number of events and campaigns across our campuses for mental health and wellbeing. Below we have highlighted a few key examples of campaigns, however this is not an exhaustive of all of the events and campaigns GCU and GCU Students' Association host for mental health and wellbeing.

01

Keep in Touch Campaign

The University aim to continue to offer their Keep in Touch campaign. Launched in 2021, paid student ambassador roles supported by the University Student Support directorate contact all students currently studying at Glasgow Caledonian University to inform them of available support and provide an informal check in opportunity.

02

National Mental Health Days

GCU and GCU Students' Association will continue to work together to host a range of activities to engage staff and students in their health and wellbeing for national mental health days including:

- Mental Health Awareness Week Campaign
- World Mental Health Day
- University Mental Health Day

03

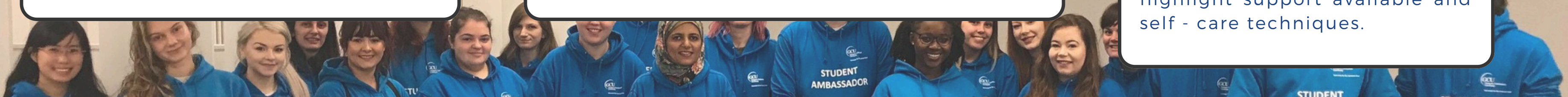
Feel Fab Feb

Led by GCU Students' Association, throughout Feb a number of mental health and wellbeing themed events and activities are organized to engage students in their mental wellbeing.

04

Exam Support

During exam periods across campus we host a number of campaigns and events to highlight support available and self - care techniques.



SUPPORTING OUR STUDENT COMMUNITIES

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 experiences that our students may encounter. GCU have established a webpage which outlines the work we undertake to support our students including partnership work with external organisations. We aim to undertake a range of actions to support all our students with their wellbeing including:

01

Student Association Give It a Go Programme (GIAG)

The GIAG programme enables GCU students to try a commitment-free one-off activity with existing on-campus groups or external community groups, with the option to continue involvement afterwards if they wish. The aim of the programme is to bring GCU students together, build relationships and community networks, foster belonging and widen participation and help students to feel less isolated, improving mental health and wellbeing.

02

Contextualised Inductions

The Student Wellbeing and Disability Teams offer contextualized workshops at inductions for mental health and wellbeing. We will continue to offer these alongside piloting additional induction programs this year. This will include:

- Mental Health Matters
- Summer Transitions in partnership with the National Autistic Society (Scotland)
- International student wellbeing welcome events [piloting from 2022]
- ADHD at University [piloting from 2022]
- Embedded talks from Student Wellbeing Advisors in the three academic school inductions [piloting from 2022]

03

Glasgow Student Nightline - helpline and volunteering opportunity for students.

Glasgow Students' Nightline is a student volunteer run peer support helpline available to students of GCU, University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde for 6 nights a week, Mon-Sun, 7pm-7am. The Nightline volunteer committee is supported by the Nightline Association and staff of the 3 Students' Associations.

04

Student Pantry

In partnership with GCU, the Student Pantry was set up by the Students' Association opening in January 2024 with free but ticketed slots for any current GCU student to book to collect a bag of 10 non-perishable food items every 2 weeks. This was a continuation of the campaign to alleviate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our members' wellbeing.

05

Supporting Students on Placement

GCU during their annual review of support for placement procedures, are further developing this in alignment with guidance from Universities UK in their 2022 publication of the suicide safer strategy. Developments for GCU will include publishing this support on a new webpage.

06

Thinking of changing or leaving your course support

We are developing a resource for students who may be considering changing or leaving their course at GCU to show the different sources of support available.

07

Winter Warmer Campaign

The Students' Association in partnership with GCU launched the Winter Warmer Campaign in early October 2023 to help alleviate the impact of the cost of living crisis. Students could drop into the SA building to access hot porridge and a hot drink every weekday morning until the end of trimester A in mid December.

MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH, STRATEGY & GOVERNANCE

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 in the University Mental Health Charter](#), and 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 both ongoing strategic projects and strategies, and introduce new innovative projects for student and staff mental health.

01 Spotlight On...Mental Health

GCU will continue to offer the Spotlight on... series which aims to shine a light on mental health or issues that can impact our mental health. Spotlight On is a series of open and authentic panel discussions with Q and As, comprising a round table of external and GCU experts, and individuals with relevant lived experiences. Each one will address a different topic related to mental health and each one will be accompanied by a short explainer video and some training material and resources.

03 UUK Suicide Safer Universities Guidance

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.

02 Student Expert Advisory Panel in our Student Wellbeing Advisory Group

To continue our work on developing mental health and wellbeing support, and ensuring this is created with students, we are will continue to appoint a number of students who will work as members of a Student Expert Advisory Panel and assist in supporting student consultation events to engage the wider student voice on different topics or services relating to mental health and wellbeing. The panel will be embedded into our governance as a subgroup of our Student Wellbeing Advisory Group, and co-chaired by GCU and GCU Students' Association.

04 Student Minds University Mental Health Charter

To further enhance and evaluate our support provisions for GCU students and staff and build upon existing projects we are continuing to engage with the University Mental Health Charter with Student Minds.

The University Mental Health Charter Framework provides a set of evidence-informed principles to support universities to adopt a whole-university approach to mental health and wellbeing.

BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY

Increasing the knowledge and understanding of our students and staff on their mental health and wellbeing, alongside what support GCU and GCU Students' Association provide for mental wellbeing, is an essential driver of both our Student Mental Health Agreement. It's important that we all know about our own mental health and wellbeing, and what support is available to access. To enhance this understanding for our students and staff we have embedded several projects:

01 Look after your mate

The Student Wellbeing Team and GCU Students' Association Advice Centre will co-deliver the Student Minds 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.

02 Scottish Mental Health First Aid award

We aim to reintroduce the Scottish Mental Health First Aid Award for students and staff at GCU in 2024.

03 Wellbeing Service workshops and campaigns

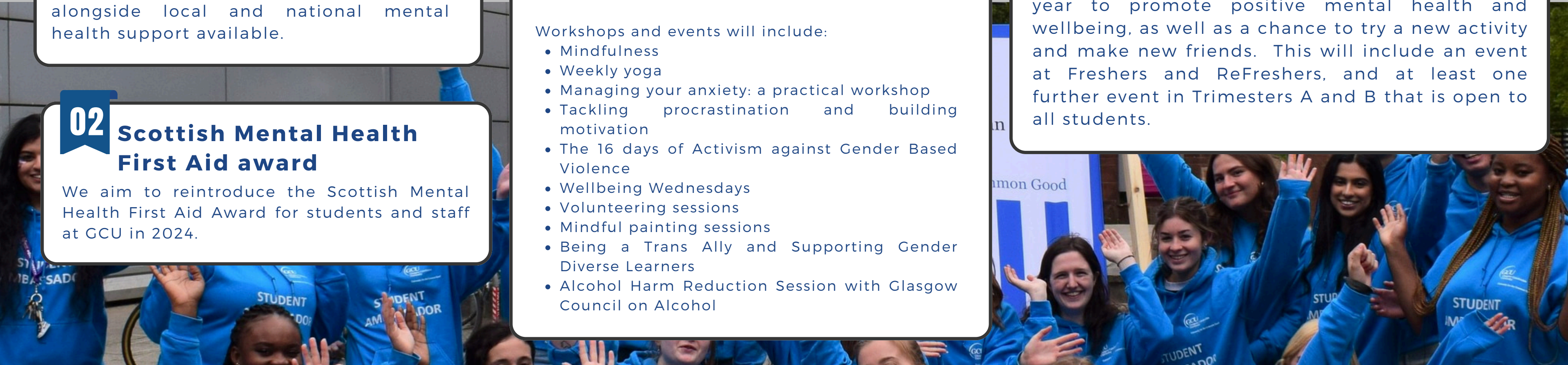
The GCU Wellbeing Team offer a range of free groups and workshops to students and staff at Glasgow Caledonian University to enhance their mental health and wellbeing. We work with both internal and external partners to provide a series of events for students and staff to learn more about and enhance their mental health and wellbeing.

Workshops and events will include:

- Mindfulness
- Weekly yoga
- Managing your anxiety: a practical workshop
- Tackling procrastination and building motivation
- The 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence
- Wellbeing Wednesdays
- Volunteering sessions
- Mindful painting sessions
- Being a Trans Ally and Supporting Gender Diverse Learners
- Alcohol Harm Reduction Session with Glasgow Council on Alcohol

04 Students' Association Wellbeing Sessions

The Students' Association will organise four free, fun and sociable wellbeing events each academic year to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, as well as a chance to try a new activity and make new friends. This will include an event at Freshers and ReFreshers, and at least one further event in Trimesters A and B that is open to all students.



SUPPORTING STAFF TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

Many students may approach academic or professional services staff for support or advice with their mental health and wellbeing. In the publication [The Role of an Academic](#), Student Minds reported academic staffs' perception that pastoral support is a significant part of their role. It's therefore essential that any approach to enhancing and supporting student mental health and wellbeing, is also mindful of and encompasses support for staff in supporting students. We have introduced a number of courses and workshops to compliment our existing staff member concerned about a student [resource](#).

01 **safeTALK: Half-day awareness raising course**

Whether directly or indirectly, most people with thoughts of suicide invite help from others to keep them safe. safeTALK is a three-hour course that prepares participants to recognise these invitations and connect those with thoughts of suicide to intervention resources.

The course includes powerful videos that illustrate the importance of suicide alertness, along with discussion and practice to stimulate learning.

After the course, participants will be better able to recognise people with thoughts of suicide and apply the TALK steps (Tell, Ask, Listen and KeepSafe) to connect them with a suicide first aid intervention caregiver. The course will be offered to GCU and GCU Students' Association staff throughout 2022 and 2023.

02 **Update the Identifying and Supporting Students in Distress Handbook**

03 **Applied suicide intervention skills training (ASIST): Two-day intervention course**

ASIST is an intensive skills-building workshop that prepares professionals to provide suicide first aid interventions and help those with thoughts of suicide. The two-day course is designed to be interactive and practice-dominated, and although ASIST is widely used by healthcare providers, participants don't need any formal training to attend the workshop. The course will be offered to GCU and GCU Students' Association staff throughout 2022, 2023 and 2024.

04 **Penumbra - Self-Harm Training**

The course will be offered to GCU and GCU Students' Association staff throughout 2022, 2023 and 2024. The course will give the participants an in-depth understanding of self-harm, the current legislation and practices around self-harm, tools to support people who are self-harming, as well as an understanding of their organisational practices, policies and needs.

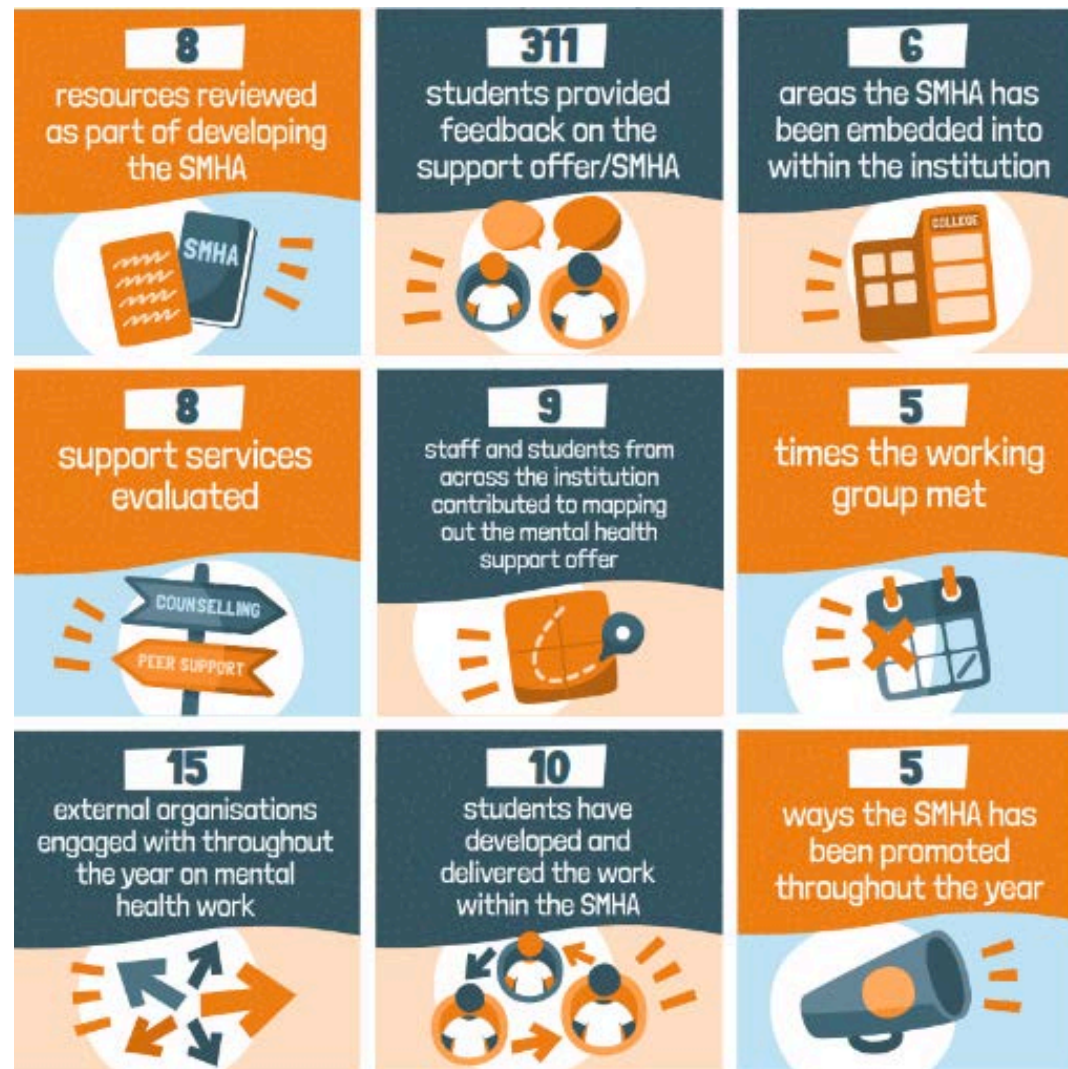
05 **SAMH and GCU workshops**

Following the Staff Mental Health Needs and Staff Pulse Surveys of 2018 and 2019 respectively, essential mental health awareness training was developed and is being offered to GCU staff. GCU has a long-standing relationship with SAMH and Keir McKechnie, Suicide Prevention - Lived Experience Panel Coordinator and Pete Copeland - Mentally Healthy University Coordinator, both from SAMH will be delivering the training alongside Rachel Simpson - Student Mental Health Project Officer from the GCU Student Wellbeing Team.

EVALUATION AND FUTURE STEPS

This document outlined the Student Mental Health Agreement Action Plan for Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association for the Academic Years between 2022 – 2024. The projects outlined in this agreement are also evaluated both within the Student Mental Health Agreement working group; or in other committees or project evaluations as appropriate to ensure we evaluate our progress towards these. Each year we also evaluate the Student Mental Health Agreement document with Think Positive about Student Mental Health. Full evaluations are available at the GCU and GCU Students' Association webpages with some key outcomes noted below.

IN 2023



HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN THE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT?

You can shape the work in our Student Mental Health Agreements by engaging with consultations throughout the year, providing feedback to services, volunteering to participate in the projects or working groups, or by contacting us at GCU Student Wellbeing at StudentWellbeing@GCU.ac.uk or the GCU Students' Association Advice Centre at advice@GCUstudents.co.uk with your thoughts.



University for the Common Good



THE GCU STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT: JUNE 2024