



QAHE Limited Mental Health Support Policy

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1. Introduction

At QA Higher Education (QAHE) we recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing are essential to the overall success, safety, and fulfilment of every individual within our community. The Mental Health Support Policy outlines our commitment to providing compassionate, timely, and effective support to anyone experiencing challenges that impact their mental health, whether on a daily basis or during times of crisis.

Our Mental Health Support Services are designed to assist with a wide range of issues, including anxiety and stress, depression or sadness, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, panic attacks, loneliness or isolation, abuse, bullying, or any other difficulty affecting your emotional wellbeing. We aim to create a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental environment where individuals can access person-centred support tailored to their unique needs.

Through this policy, we affirm our dedication to:

- Offering timely responses to client requests and effective crisis intervention where required.
- Providing clear explanations of recommendations, treatment plans, and support options.
- Ensuring the confidentiality and dignity of all clients.
- Delivering culturally competent and inclusive services.
- Promoting collaboration with external services where additional support is needed.

In return, we ask those accessing our services to engage respectfully, communicate openly, and participate actively in the therapeutic process.

This policy supports our ongoing commitment to fostering a healthy, resilient, and inclusive environment, where everyone feels empowered to seek help and supported in achieving positive mental health outcomes.

2. Policy Ownership

The Mental Health Support Policy is owned and overseen by the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team. This department is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation, monitoring, and ongoing review of the policy to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the students at QA Higher Education.

The Assistant Director of Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing holds overall accountability for:

- Ensuring the policy aligns with organisational values, legal obligations, and best practice in mental health support.
- Overseeing the delivery and quality assurance of mental health support services.
- Reviewing feedback from service users, staff, and stakeholders to inform continuous improvement.
- Ensuring that all relevant staff are aware of, and adhere to, the policy's principles and procedures.



All employees and practitioners delivering mental health support under this policy are responsible for implementing its provisions in their daily work, maintaining confidentiality, and upholding the highest standards of professionalism and care.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if required, to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Updates or amendments will be approved by the Executive Board of QA Higher Education.

3. Scope

This Mental Health Support Policy applies to all individuals who access, deliver, or oversee mental health support services within QA Higher Education. The policy outlines the principles, standards, and expectations that guide the provision of safe, effective, and person-centred mental health and wellbeing support.

The policy applies to:

- **Students** seeking mental health support, including those experiencing difficulties such as anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, panic attacks, loneliness, isolation, abuse, bullying, or any issue affecting mental wellbeing.
- **Mental Health Practitioners and Wellbeing Staff** who deliver one-to-one support, interventions, and psychoeducational resources.
- **Managers, and Team Leaders** responsible for the coordination, monitoring, and quality assurance of mental health support services.
- **External partners or agencies** engaged in providing, facilitating, or complementing internal mental health support.

This policy covers all modes of service delivery, including:

- In-person sessions
- Telephone support
- Virtual or online appointments
- Liaison and referral to external services

The scope of this policy is limited to the provision of mental health and wellbeing support services. It does not extend to clinical diagnosis, long-term therapy, or crisis intervention beyond the service's capacity. Where appropriate, individuals will be supported to access external or specialist services for ongoing or intensive care.

4. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following terms are defined as:

- **Mental Health Practitioner:** A trained and qualified professional (e.g. mental health advisor, or wellbeing practitioner) who provides one-to-one, person-centred support to clients in accordance with professional and ethical standards.
- **Client/Service User:** Any individual (e.g., student, staff member, or community participant) who accesses the organisation's mental health support services.



- **Crisis:** A situation in which an individual's mental or emotional state poses an immediate risk to their own safety or the safety of others, requiring urgent support or intervention.
- **Confidentiality:** The ethical and legal duty to protect personal and sensitive information shared by clients, except where disclosure is necessary to prevent harm to the individual or others, or when required by law.
- **Person-Centred Support:** An approach that recognises and respects each individual's unique experiences, needs, and goals, ensuring that care and interventions are tailored accordingly.
- **Psychoeducational Resources:** Materials or tools designed to increase understanding of mental health issues and support self-management, resilience, and personal growth.
- **External Services:** Agencies, organisations, or professionals outside QA Higher Education that provide additional or specialised support, such as clinical therapy, psychiatric care, or crisis intervention.

5. Policy Statement

QA Higher Education is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all students. We recognise that university life can bring a range of challenges, academic, personal, social, and financial, that may impact a student's emotional and psychological wellbeing

This policy sets out QA Higher Education's commitment to providing accessible, confidential, and high-quality mental health support services to all students who may be experiencing difficulties such as anxiety, depression, stress, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, panic attacks, loneliness, bullying, abuse, or any other issues affecting their mental health.

Our aim is to:

- Ensure that all students have timely access to professional, person-centred support.
- Provide services that are responsive, inclusive, and culturally competent, respecting the diversity and individuality of each student.
- Promote early intervention and empower students to build resilience and develop effective coping strategies.
- Maintain confidentiality and uphold professional and ethical standards in all interactions.
- Facilitate collaboration with internal and external services where additional or specialist support is needed.
- Contribute to a university culture that reduces stigma and promotes open dialogue around mental health and wellbeing.

Through this policy, QA Higher Education reaffirms its commitment to supporting every student in achieving their academic potential and personal development by ensuring that mental health and wellbeing are prioritised as fundamental aspects of university life.



6. Responsibilities

The effective delivery and implementation of the Mental Health Support Policy relies on the shared commitment and responsibility of the University, its staff, and students. The following outlines the key responsibilities of each group involved:

6.1. QA Higher Education

QA Higher Education is responsible for:

- Providing accessible, professional, and confidential mental health support services for all students.
- Ensuring that mental health practitioners and wellbeing staff are appropriately qualified, supervised, and supported in their roles.
- Maintaining clear procedures for referrals, crisis intervention, and safeguarding.
- Promoting awareness of mental health and reducing stigma through education, campaigns, and inclusive practice.
- Ensuring that all facilities, processes, and communications are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of students.
- Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the mental health support services and policy on a regular basis.

6.2. Mental Health Practitioners and Wellbeing Staff

Practitioners and wellbeing professionals are responsible for:

- Providing timely, person-centred, and culturally sensitive support to students.
- Maintaining confidentiality and professional boundaries at all times.
- Offering clear explanations of treatment options, interventions, and next steps.
- Keeping accurate and secure records in accordance with data protection and safeguarding regulations.
- Liaising with academic staff, external services, or emergency contacts where appropriate and with the student's consent (except where there is a risk of harm).
- Contributing to the continuous improvement of the service through feedback and reflective practice.

6.3. Academic and Professional Services Staff

All staff who have contact with students are responsible for:

- Recognising and responding appropriately to signs of distress or mental health concerns.
- Referring students to the QA Higher Education's Mental Health Support Service or other appropriate resources when needed.
- Maintaining confidentiality and sensitivity when discussing or handling student wellbeing matters.
- Participating in relevant mental health awareness or safeguarding training as required QA Higher Education.



6.4. Students

Students accessing mental health support are responsible for:

- Engaging actively in the support process and implementing agreed strategies or interventions.
- Treating practitioners and staff with respect and courtesy.
- Providing at least 24 hours' notice if unable to attend a scheduled appointment.
- Understanding the boundaries of the service and cooperating with referrals to external support where necessary.
- Seeking help promptly when experiencing mental health difficulties or when concerned about the wellbeing of a peer.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

This Mental Health Support Policy should be read in conjunction with other University policies, procedures, and guidance documents that collectively support the wellbeing, safety, and inclusion of all students. Together, these frameworks ensure a consistent, coordinated, and ethical approach to mental health and student welfare.

The following related policies and procedures may include, but are not limited to:

- **Safeguarding Policy** – Outlines the University's duty of care to protect students from harm, abuse, or neglect, and provides guidance for responding to safeguarding concerns.
- **Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy** – Details how personal and sensitive information is managed, stored, and shared in accordance with data protection legislation (e.g., UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018).
- **Equality and Diversity Policy** – Promotes fair treatment and equal access to support for all students, regardless of background, identity, or personal circumstances.
- **Respect for All Policy** – Sets out the expected standards of behaviour, including respect for staff and peers within the context of support services.
- **Fitness to Study Policy** – Provides a framework for supporting students whose health, wellbeing, or behaviour may impact their ability to engage safely or effectively with their studies.
- **Complaints Policy** – Enables students to raise concerns or provide feedback about the mental health support service or any aspect of their experience, to support continuous improvement.

Students and staff are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these documents to understand how the University's approach to mental health and wellbeing integrates with wider support, safeguarding, and governance frameworks.



8. Implementation Procedures

The Mental Health Support Policy is implemented through a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach led by the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team, working in partnership with academic departments, professional services, and external agencies where appropriate. The procedures prioritise early intervention, compassionate support, safeguarding, and proportionate responses to risk.

8.1. Accessing Mental Health Support

Students may access mental health support through self-referral or referral by staff, peers, or external partners. Clear referral pathways and information about available support services will be promoted across QA Higher Education to encourage early help-seeking and reduce stigma.

Mental health practitioners will assess individual needs and agree appropriate, person-centred support plans, which may include brief interventions, psychoeducation, coping strategies, or referral to external services.

8.2. Responding to Students in Crisis

A mental health crisis is defined as a situation where there is an immediate or significant risk to the safety of the student or others.

On-Campus Crisis

Where a student is in crisis on campus:

- The Safeguarding Team will take the lead in coordinating the immediate response.
- The priority will be to ensure the student's safety by providing a calm, private space and conducting an initial risk assessment.
- Emergency services and campus security will be contacted where there is an immediate risk of harm.
- Relevant internal stakeholders (e.g. Student Wellbeing, Learning Support, academic staff, Security teams) will be informed on a need-to-know basis.
- All actions will be recorded in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Off-Campus Crisis

Where a student is in crisis off campus:

- Emergency services should be contacted immediately if there is a risk to life or safety.
- The Safeguarding Team should be notified as soon as practicable.
- The Safeguarding Team will follow up to coordinate support, provide guidance, and liaise with external services as appropriate.
- In all crisis situations, the Safeguarding Team will act in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and duty of care obligations, balancing confidentiality with the need to prevent harm.

8.3. Ongoing Support Following a Crisis

Once the immediate risk has been addressed:

- The Safeguarding Team, in collaboration with Mental Health Practitioners and Student Wellbeing services, will agree an ongoing support plan with the student.
- This may include continued mental health support, academic flexibility, reasonable adjustments, and referral to external or specialist services.



- Where concerns persist regarding the student's ability to engage safely with study or student life, the Fitness to Study Policy may be initiated.

8.4. Alignment with other policies

The Mental Health Support Policy operates alongside other QAHE policies and procedures to ensure a consistent, coordinated and proportionate approach to student wellbeing, safety and conduct.

Depending on the nature of the concern, this policy may be applied in conjunction with:

QAHE Safeguarding Policy, where there are concerns relating to risk of harm, abuse, or vulnerability;

QAHE Fitness to Study Policy, where a student's mental health or wellbeing may impact their ability to engage safely or effectively with their studies or student life;

The Respect for All and Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Policies, where behaviours linked to mental distress affect the safety, dignity or wellbeing of others; and

QAHE Equality and Diversity Policy, to ensure reasonable adjustments are considered and support is provided in a fair and inclusive manner.

No single policy operates in isolation. Decisions will be informed by individual circumstances, professional judgement, and risk assessment, with the aim of supporting the student while safeguarding the wider QA Higher Education community.

8.5. Communication, Record-Keeping and Confidentiality

All interactions, assessments, decisions and support plans will be recorded securely and handled in accordance with data protection and confidentiality requirements. Information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis, except where disclosure is required to safeguard the student or others.

8.6. Staff awareness and Training

Relevant staff will receive appropriate training and guidance on recognising mental distress, referral routes, crisis response, and safeguarding responsibilities. This ensures that concerns are identified early and responded to consistently and appropriately.

8.7. Review and Quality Assurance

The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team will monitor the implementation of this policy, reviewing trends, feedback and outcomes to ensure services remain effective, inclusive and aligned with best practice. Where necessary, procedures will be updated to respond to emerging risks or sector guidance.

9. Monitoring and Compliance

The Mental Health Support Policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure its continued effectiveness, relevance, and alignment with best practice in student mental health support.



The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Teams, under the oversight of the Assistant Director of Student Life and Wellbeing, are responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. This includes:

- Reviewing service delivery data, feedback, and case outcomes to identify areas for improvement.
- Ensuring staff adhere to professional and ethical standards, confidentiality requirements, and safeguarding procedures.
- Conducting annual policy reviews or earlier if required due to legislative, regulatory, or institutional changes.
- Reporting on key findings, trends, and recommendations to the Risk Committee or equivalent governance body.

Non-compliance with this policy will be addressed through appropriate management or disciplinary procedures, depending on the nature and severity of the issue.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

QA Higher Education is committed to ensuring that the Mental Health Support Policy upholds the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the QA Higher Education's Equality and Diversity Policy.

This policy has been assessed to ensure that it does not directly or indirectly discriminate against individuals or groups based on any protected characteristic, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

The University recognises that some students may experience additional barriers to accessing mental health support due to cultural, social, or personal factors. To address this, services will be:

- Culturally competent, accessible, and sensitive to diverse needs and experiences.
- Delivered in a manner that promotes equity of access and outcomes for all students.
- Regularly reviewed, with data and feedback monitored to identify and address any disproportionate impact on specific groups.

Where potential inequalities or barriers are identified, the University will take proactive steps to remove or mitigate them, ensuring that all students have equal opportunity to benefit from mental health and wellbeing support.

11. Data Protection

All personal and sensitive information collected through the provision of mental health support services will be handled in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and QAHE's Data Protection Policy.

Student information will be:

- Collected and recorded only for the purposes of providing safe, effective, and personalised mental health support.



- Stored securely and access limited to authorised staff directly involved in the provision of support.
- Shared with external agencies or other University departments only with the student's explicit consent, except in circumstances where there is a legal duty to disclose or a risk of harm to the student or others.

Students have the right to request access to their personal information and to seek correction of any inaccuracies. The University is committed to maintaining confidentiality while balancing legal and safeguarding obligations.

12. Further Information

For additional guidance, support, or clarification regarding this policy, students and staff can contact:

- **Welfare Team**
 - **Email:** qahe.welfare@qa.com
 - **Phone:** 0203 921 0163
 - **Website:** [Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing |](#)
- **Mental Health Practitioners**
 - **Email:** qahe.mentalhealthsupport@qa.com
 - **Phone:** 0203 921 0163
 - **Website:** [Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing |](#)
- **External Support Services (for crisis or specialist support)**
 - **Samaritans:** 116 123
 - **Mind:** 0300 123 3393

Students are encouraged to seek support promptly if experiencing mental health difficulties or if they are concerned about the wellbeing of a peer. Additional resources, including guidance documents, workshops, and psychoeducational materials, are available via the Student Wellbeing website or through direct contact with the Mental Health Support Service.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, at least annually, to ensure it remains current, effective, and aligned with best practice in higher education mental health support.

The Student Wellbeing and Mental Health Services, under the oversight of the Assistant Director of Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing and the Head of Safeguarding and Student Wellbeing, are responsible for coordinating the review process. Feedback from students, staff, and other stakeholders will be considered to identify improvements or updates.

Any amendments or updates to the policy will be approved by the Academic Board..



