



Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2030

Supporting Our People to Thrive



University
of Exeter



“ The mental wellbeing of our community underpins everything we do. In order to achieve our vision as a University, it is essential that we support our community to thrive and create a compassionate culture.

This Mental Wellbeing Strategy is a commitment to continuously develop our approaches in a strategic way, ensuring we are taking focused action to achieve our aims and support one another to reach our full potential.

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Professor Lisa Roberts
President and Vice-Chancellor

Strategy 2030

Together we reach our potential

In Strategy 2030, we made a commitment to Our People – to support each other to thrive, be fulfilled and reach our potential.

We continue to celebrate diversity, be inclusive, be fair and compassionate in everything we do.

Our Vision

Our vision for mental health at Exeter, alongside our strategic aims and objectives, aligns with a whole university approach informed by best-practice guidance from Universities UK, the University Mental Health Charter and the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards (Mental Health) and internal research.

Pillars of Delivery

This strategy has four “Pillars” of delivery which summarise our commitments in relation to mental health and wellbeing for our whole community. We regularly review and develop our approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing at all levels.



A community where we all support each other's mental wellbeing to thrive, be fulfilled and reach our potential whilst at and beyond the university. An environment where we recognise the diversity of lived experience in everything we do, and stigma is challenged. A community that is inclusive, fair and compassionate.



Context

The University of Exeter places the mental health of the student and staff community at the heart of its mission and Strategy 2030. We focus on health, wellbeing, social justice and inclusion as these are the essential components of a compassionate University culture and ethos, critical for mental health and wellbeing. Our Mental Wellbeing Strategy is a key enabler of Strategy 2030.

To ensure the Mental Wellbeing Strategy is embedded in all areas of delivery, we have also built upon other key institutional strategies and policies, notably:

- University Strategy 2030 which positions ‘Our People’ at the heart of everything we do.
- Our Education Strategy which, by prioritising ‘success for all’, already recognises the different learning and support needs of our diverse community.
- Our Access and Participation Plan which further recognises that our success in closing the awarding gap for students with protected characteristics is contingent upon how we reduce barriers and enhance individual wellbeing.

The mental health of university students and staff has been a sector concern with research demonstrating decreasing mental health in University environments over the past decade. Evidence shows the essential skills for learning and working such as problem solving, creativity, and accommodation and assimilation of new ideas (cognitive function) all depend on a good level of mental health. When mental health problems arise, the impact on ability to learn, work and achieve success is often difficult to manage. In contrast connectedness and a sense of belonging, meaningful activity, learning and engagement have been shown positively to influence wellbeing.

In our work to support mental health, we adopt the [Universities UK Step change framework](#) ensuring we have initiatives at each level:

- **Prevention and health promotion** – early identification of mental ill-health.
- **Clinically sound support interventions** – aimed at the least intrusive possible method.
- **We use our internal research** to inform our practice and working with partners (NHS, Student’s Guild, and Student’s Union) to ensure a joined-up approach.
- **We take an inclusive, intersectional and whole university approach**, ensuring health and wellbeing is embedded in policy, process and practice to help support our vision.



Institutional Governance, Delivery and Measures

The strategy is owned by the University Wellbeing, Inclusion and Culture Committee, and the University Executive Board and progress will be reviewed annually.

This strategy is underpinned by our University Mental Health Charter Action plan which will be our key avenue for delivering initiatives outlined in this strategy; using institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are regularly monitored to track progress. We will continue to engage with our community to ensure our actions are meeting their needs.

Pillar 1: Live

Commitment: Ensure our built, social, digital and natural environments are accessible, and supportive of mental health and wellbeing; building a sense of community and compassionate culture that enables all of our community to thrive.

Communicate and offer ways to support positive mental health, as well as providing spaces for our community to connect with each other. We will strive to ensure that our environment safeguards and meets the needs of our diverse community.

Our priorities to achieve this are:

- **Safe, Healthy and Inclusive Environments** – ensure university spaces are welcoming and accessible, fostering a sense of belonging for everyone.
- **Social Connection and peer support activities** – support and promote social opportunities and activities to reduce isolation and promote a sense of community.
- **Health promotion** – offer opportunities for all to engage in learning about their health, healthy behaviours, healthy living as well as promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- **Digital Knowledge** – provide resources and support for all whether they are joining us remotely or in person, to maintain a healthy way of working and studying.

Pillar 2: Support

Commitment: Recognise that everyone may require additional support to thrive and provide access to support services which are informed by good practice, safe, differentiated and accessible.

Support our community at the earliest opportunity, developing proactive approaches and strategies to ensure timely identification and support for mental health and wellbeing.

Share information appropriately and work with our external partners to provide seamless support.

Our priorities to achieve this are:

- **A focus on early intervention** – across all areas of the University we strive to identify and support anyone experiencing a decline in their wellbeing or mental health, facilitating access to support once need is identified.
- **Comprehensive Support Services** – commit to the continuous improvement of our existing range of wellbeing-focused support services, tailored to the diverse needs of the university community.
- **Collaboration with External Agencies** – foster strong partnerships with external agencies including the NHS, student unions, charities and service providers to enhance access to quality support services, integrated support, and a holistic approach to wellbeing.
- **Training Programmes** – train and empower all to feel able to respond to someone who is struggling, for example through the implementation of mental health and suicide awareness programmes and targeted awareness campaigns.

Pillar 3: Learn

Commitment: Provide an inspiring learning environment in which all our community can flourish and achieve their potential.

Support our community through transition and progression to enhance mental health and wellbeing.

Target support to those in our community that face additional barriers to access or learning, seeking to pro-actively remove these where possible.

Our priorities to achieve this are:

- **Inclusive Learning** – a culture of learning which works with our community to minimise barriers and promotes inclusion, working to eliminate access and attainment gaps.
- **Learning Design** – considering mental health and wellbeing at the centre of design and delivery stages and where our people are equipped with skills to thrive.
- **Peer Support Networks** – strengthen peer support networks to provide everyone with a place to collaborate, share knowledge and experience and connect, enhancing a sense of belonging.
- **Mental Health Awareness** – provide training and support to our community to recognise and respond to mental health and wellbeing in learning spaces, creating a supportive learning environment.

Pillar 4: Work

Commitment: Support our community with what is needed to understand and feel confident in their roles, manage the demands of their work, have appropriate influence in the way they work, receive sufficient support and have positive working relationships. This includes how organisational change is managed and communicated to support positive mental health.

Our community will be aware of the support available to them and have the required, role-specific, training to support their own and other's mental health.

Our priorities to achieve this are:

- **Develop compassionate leaders and people managers** – empower our community to be confident in identifying and facilitating a healthy work environment, through showing compassion and modelling positive behaviours.
- **Designing work and workloads** – aligning with the drivers of good mental health in the workplace.
- **Promote resources and healthy behaviours** – continue to promote support, resources and healthy behaviours within the workplace through regular communications and networks.
- **Understanding Wellbeing Impact** – promote and further embed the use of evaluation, reflection and monitoring tools, so that mental health and wellbeing is actively considered at all levels of work design, policy and decision making.



Conclusion

Our success is reliant upon continuous improvement to support the wellbeing and mental health of all within our community.

How well students and colleagues are empowered to thrive and achieve their potential, as well as supported when in distress, are the indicators of our success. This strategy sets out our vision to create a healthy learning, working, and living environment where all members of the University can flourish, taking a whole-University approach.



Wellbeing, Inclusion and Culture

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