

University Mental Health Charter:

Student-Led Improvement Tool

An initiative by
**student
minds**



University
Mental Health
Charter

How to use this document

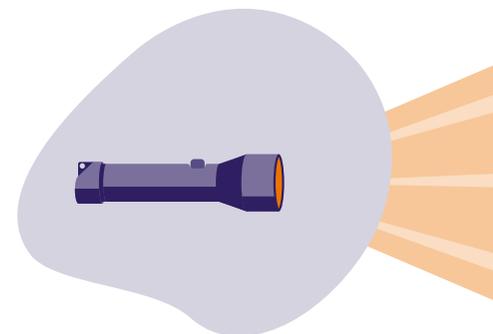
This document is designed to be downloaded and filled in on your device.

For best viewing open this document in Google, Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Acrobat Reader which is free to download from <https://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>

You can enter information in the "What does the university do?" and "Actions the university can take to improve" columns in the table for each theme, as well as provide a theme rating. There is extra note space at the end of each theme. You can then save the file and return to it at a later date.

Use the menu on the left hand side of the theme pages, or the next, previous and home buttons at the top of the page to easily navigate your way through the document.

More information about how to use the tool itself is on [page 5](#) of this document.



Contents



Introduction

What is this tool?

The Student-Led Improvement Tool aims to support students to participate in evaluating and improving their university's approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The tool aligns with the [University Mental Health Charter](#), an evidence-informed framework for universities to implement an effective, holistic, and inclusive approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the whole university community. Using this tool, students can reflect on their university's progress towards the Principles of good practice outlined in the University Mental Health Charter framework, and engage in collaborative discussion to suggest recommendations for improvement.

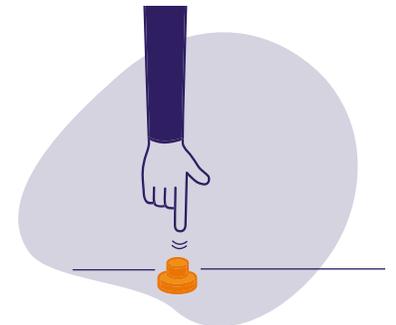
The tool is not designed to be a rigorous or objective assessment of the university's practice, but help to build an honest picture to understand and improve the perspectives and experiences of different students at your university. Although this tool may be useful in completing the Self-Assessment and Student-Led Report as part of the Charter Award process, it will not be formally assessed. It also does not prescribe specific actions for the university to meet the Principles of good practice, but encourages students to reflect on actions that they think the university should take to improve.

Where has this tool come from?

The tool has been co-created with a panel of student volunteers and piloted with staff and student officers from 3 Students' Unions, supported by funding from the Charlie Watkins Foundation.

Who is the tool for?

The tool is for students, student leaders, and Students' Union staff who want to participate in evaluating and improving their university's approach to mental health and wellbeing.



How do I use the tool?

Getting started

The tool can be used flexibly depending on your needs and circumstances. You may find it helpful to create a group of both university staff and students who can meet to complete the tool together. Alternatively, you might complete the tool as a group of students or as a Students' Union and use it as a basis for discussion with relevant university staff. It might help to ask someone from the Students' Union to support you to coordinate and record these conversations when completing the tool.

To ensure the experience of the whole university community is considered, we encourage you to involve a diverse range of students in evaluating the university's approach [[see pp. 65-68](#)]. You may also wish to engage with other stakeholders, such as relevant university staff, local health services, the local council, accommodation providers, schools, colleges, and employers.

Themes: The tool is structured to align with the [University Mental Health Charter framework](#), containing 5 domains - Learn, Support, Live, Work and Enabling themes- each with 2-5 sub-themes. We strongly recommend using this tool alongside the Charter framework which describes good practice for each theme.

People to talk to/ evidence: For each of the five domains, there is a list of people to talk to and evidence that might be useful to support you to reflect on your university's approach to this domain. These are intended to be suggestions only; who you decide to speak to and what evidence you use will depend on what time, resource, and access to evidence you have.

Guiding questions: Guiding questions are included to help you reflect on how effectively your university is working towards the Principles of good practice in each theme. You can use personal experience, any evidence you have collected, and conversations with staff and students to reflect on the questions together. Don't worry if you are unable to answer every question; these are just prompts to help you reflect on different aspects of the theme.

What does the university do: There is space to note down your reflections against the guiding questions. Remember to note down anything the university does that you have found is good practice, as well as areas where the university could do more. Do not worry if you aren't aware or are unsure what your university does in a certain area; write down any thoughts you have and how you could find out more.

Rating Your Progress:

We have provided a rating table that sets out the 5 areas of development each university should work on in line with the Charter's Principles of good practice. Either individually or as a group, you can use the rating table to rate the university's progress towards the Principles of good practice in each theme. Don't worry if you don't agree; the rating and evidence will be subjective, so use any discrepancies or disagreements as the basis of discussion to understand and identify possible improvements. Remember, the tool is not designed to be a formal audit or assessment.

Action Planning:

As a group of students, or together with university staff, you can collaboratively identify any actions for improvement. There is space to detail these actions against each theme. Remember, the University Mental Health Charter is non-prescriptive and is intended to support improvement, rather than set standards; universities and their students should therefore use the Student-Led Improvement Tool to reflect on how they are approaching the theme and identify actions that are relevant and appropriate to their unique context and student community. It is recommended that any agreed actions are clear, that an appropriate timeframe has been identified, and consideration has been given to how the action will be evaluated (Check out these [top tips!](#)).

You might also find the [Student Minds' co-production guide](#) useful to explore a range of ways universities and students can work together in taking a strategic approach to mental health and wellbeing.



Rating Table

Score	Rating	Description	Recommended actions will relate to
0	Is not working towards Principles of good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The university has made minimal progress towards the Principles of good practice in this area and/ or the approach presents risks to the mental health and wellbeing of students and/or staff that requires urgent attention. There are limited plans for development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant gaps in strategy, policy, processes, services, and practice needed to address the Principles of good practice. Ineffective approaches to the Principles of good practice. Risks to staff or student mental health.
1	Emerging good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The university is starting to make progress towards some of the Principles of good practice in this area. There may be emerging isolated examples of good practice that would benefit from being embedded across other parts of the university. The university has acknowledged areas for development. The approach does not present any risks to mental health and wellbeing that cannot be addressed quickly and simply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaknesses or lack of clarity in the university's approach to the Principles of good practice. Shortcomings in the way the approach is applied in practice. Embedding practice found in one area more widely. Areas of risk which can be addressed quickly and simply.
2	Addressing the Principles of good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The university is making good progress towards almost all the Principles of good practice in this area. The university is starting to embed good practice in strategy, policy, and practice. The university identifies areas for development on an ongoing basis. There is some evidence that the approach is broadly effective. The approach is informed by input from staff and students. The approach does not present any risks to mental health and wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement against a small number of the Principles of good practice. Continuation or development of work already underway that will allow the university to meet Principles of good practice more fully. Embedding practice across the university. Areas that might benefit from further development.

Score	Rating	Description	Recommended actions will relate to
3	Demonstrates good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The university has a well-developed approach to the Principles of good practice in this area. The university is making good progress towards embedding this approach in strategy, policy and practice across most of the university. There is clear evidence that the approach is effective. There are examples of excellent practice that would benefit the sector as a whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor changes to the approach. Continuing development of work already underway.
4	Demonstrates excellent practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The university's approach meets fully or exceeds the Principles of good practice in this area. Good practice is part of a whole-university, strategic approach and is embedded routinely and consistently across the university. The university undertakes robust evaluation of its approach and is able to evidence its effectiveness. The university regularly works with staff and students to co-create, evaluate, and improve its approach. The university is able to demonstrate many areas of excellent practice that have a demonstrable positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. The university has positively influenced the sector through its practice and sharing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no substantive recommendations for improvement.

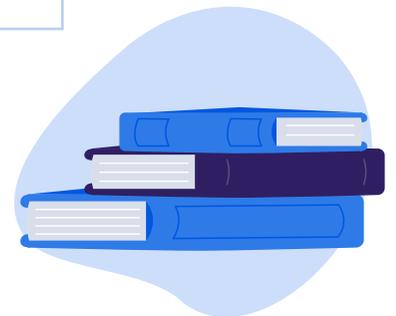
Learn

People that might be useful to talk to when evaluating this area:

- Learning and Teaching Staff
- Dean of College/ Faculty
- Student Experience/ Transition Officer
- Library Manager
- Careers Manager

Evidence that might be useful to consider when evaluating this area:

- Student Lived Experience
- Pre-Entry and Arrival Surveys
- Evaluations of Induction Provision (e.g. summer schools; welcome events; library tours)
- Student Online Learning Analytics
- Module Evaluations
- Teaching Excellence Framework Feedback
- National Student Survey
- Policy Documents for Supporting Students on Placement
- Induction Resources for Students and Parents



Theme 1: Transition into University

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well is support for student transition into university embedded across university provision and into the curriculum?			
Do measures to support transition begin from pre-application and continue through application, pre-entry, arrival, induction and through the first year?			
How well do measures to support transition promote wellbeing, academic confidence, academic integration and social connectedness?			
Are there interventions for students who face additional barriers to transitioning into university?			

Theme 2: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does learning and teaching enable all students to develop academic confidence and improve performance?			
How well does the curriculum support students to acquire skills, knowledge, and understanding at an appropriate pace?			
How well does teaching encourage deep learning and development?			
How well does the design of learning, teaching and assessment impact positively on the mental health and wellbeing of all students?			
Are academic staff clear on their role in supporting student mental health and maintaining appropriate, supportive boundaries?			
How well do staff understand how they can support student mental health and wellbeing through learning, teaching and assessment?			

Theme 3: Progression

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well are students supported to prepare for the multiple, ongoing transitions they encounter during university?			
Is targeted support provided for students on placement and on professional programmes?			
How well are students who take a break from their studies supported, both during their break and when they return?			
How well are students supported to prepare for life, career, and further study beyond graduation?			
How well is transition support embedded into the curriculum and university practice?			

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Support

People that might be useful to talk to when evaluating this area:

- Student Services Manager
- Mental Health/ Wellbeing Team Manager
- Counselling Service Manager
- Disability Service Manager
- Mental Health Advisor/ Practitioner
- Students' Union Advice Service

Evidence that might be useful to consider when evaluating this area:

- Student Lived Experience
- Staff Lived Experience
- Clinical Outcome Data
- Service Engagement and Evaluation Data
- Service Waiting Lists
- Risk Management Policies
- Information Sharing Policies
- Planning Documentation for Suicide Clusters and Reporting to the Media
- Student Safety Plans



Theme 4: Support Services

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
Are support services resourced appropriately?			
How safe are support services?			
How responsive are support services to students' current and future needs?			
Are support services equally accessible to all students?			
Are support services managed well and do they seek to continually improve?			

Theme 5: Risk

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How effective are processes for assessing risk to staff and students, and appropriately referring those at risk to internal or external services?			
Does the university ensure staff have access to timely expert advice and guidance?			
Are interventions provided for all affected by suicide?			
How well does the university plan for prevention, intervention, and postvention activities?			
How well does the university ensure that there is a safe physical environment and university culture?			
How well supported are students to report concerns?			

Theme 6: External Partnerships and Pathways

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does the university build collaborative relationships with local NHS, Social Care, and third sector agencies?			
How well does the university work collaboratively with NHS/Social Care to support individual students?			
How well are NHS/Social Care and other relevant agencies supported to understand how student life influences treatment options?			
How effective are arrangements to assess risk and communicate this to NHS/Social Care?			
How well does the university work with NHS/Social Care to support students to return to study?			
How effectively does the university work with Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) funded private providers?			

Theme 7: Information Sharing

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well do university services work with students to mobilise all available resources to support their mental health?			
How well does the university work with families, statutory services and others to provide effective support for students with poor mental health?			
Is student autonomy central to decision making regarding information sharing, where appropriate?			
Does the university ensure that any decision to pass on information without consent is done appropriately as a result of clinical assessment?			
Is information passed to the most appropriate people to reduce risk?			
How clear, accessible and visible are confidentiality arrangements and relevant Data Sharing Agreements?			

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Work

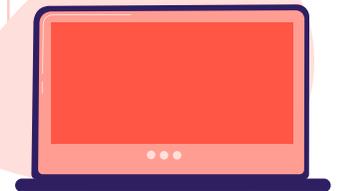
Staff wellbeing is an important component of a whole university approach. Whilst we recognise that students may not have direct knowledge of the staff experience, we recommend using this as an opportunity to note down your reflections, and to make suggestions for how the university can work with students to improve the approach going forwards.

People that might be useful to talk to when evaluating this area:

- Senior Human Resources Manager
- Senior Professional Services Manager
- Senior Academic Management
- Staff development Manager
- Union Representatives

Evidence that might be useful to consider when evaluating this area:

- Staff Lived Experience
- Staff Consultation Data
- PGR Student Experience
- Staff Training Evaluations
- Occupational Health Data
- Staff Intervention Engagement and Evaluation Data
- Evaluations of Resources for Staff
- Staff Advice and Debrief Protocols for Student Concerns
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)



Theme 8: Staff Wellbeing

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does the university develop a culture and environment that supports good staff wellbeing and workplace conditions?			
How well does the university ensure staff feel able to discuss their own mental health and wellbeing, and have access to effective, accessible support and proactive interventions?			
How well does the university ensure staff feel psychologically safe to innovate, identify improvements, and raise concerns about culture and practice that may impact on mental health?			
How well does the university equip managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support good wellbeing and respond to poor mental health within their teams?			
How well does the university enable staff to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle and workplace behaviours?			
Does the university support staff to spend a significant proportion of their time on work that is meaningful and appropriate to their role?			

Theme 9: Staff Development

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well are staff supported to develop the confidence and ability to promote positive mental health?			
How well are staff supported to recognise and respond appropriately to poor mental health and signs of risk, signpost effectively, and maintain safe boundaries?			
Do staff receive mental health training that is context and role specific?			
How well do managers support staff who may encounter student mental illness?			
How well are managers enabled to promote good wellbeing and provide appropriate support within their teams?			
Does the university ensure staff in mental health roles engage in regular, ongoing clinical development?			

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Live

People that might be useful to talk to when evaluating this area:

- Students' Union President & Welfare Officers
- Accommodation Manager
- Senior Estates Manager
- Student Experience Manager
- Relevant Private/ External Accommodation Providers
- Any Staff Member Responsible for Community Cohesion

Evidence that might be useful to consider when evaluating this area:

- Student Lived Experiences
- Staff Lived Experiences
- Intervention Engagement and Evaluation Data
- Engagement Data from Mental Health Campaigns
- Feedback from Accommodation Providers
- Accommodation Policies and Procedures
- Policies to Prevent and Address Marginalisation, Discrimination or Harassment
- Sports and Societies Provision and Engagement



Theme 10: Proactive Interventions

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does the university promote the mental health of all through healthy behaviours, community- building, and proactive interventions?			
How well does the university create an environment and culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing?			
How well does the university create an environment with multiple opportunities to learn and maintain healthy behaviours?			
How well does the university create a culture that visibly prioritises mental health as important?			
How well does the university create a culture in which individuals feel safe and supported to disclose poor mental health?			

Theme 11: Residential Accommodation

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does student accommodation ensure a safe environment that is positive for mental health and wellbeing?			
How well does student accommodation support every student to meet their physical and psychological needs and manage their wellbeing?			
How well does the university ensure student accommodation is inclusive, supports all students to find their friendship group and build a sense of belonging?			
How effective does the university collaborate with accommodation providers to recognise poor mental health and to refer students to appropriate support?			
How effectively are accommodation staff trained and supported to respond to student mental illness?			
How effective is the support given to accommodation staff in responding to student mental illness?			

Theme 12: Social Integration and Belonging

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does the university ensure a diverse and safe community?			
How well does the university actively and systematically support the social integration of all students?			
How effective is the university at taking action to tackle the causes and effects of social isolation?			
How effective is support provided for those experiencing loneliness?			
How well does the university prevent and address marginalisation, discrimination or harassment of individual students and groups?			
How well does the university ensure that social cohesion and individual differences can co-exist?			

Theme 13: Physical Environment

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does the university embed wellbeing and accessibility within the design of new buildings and developments?			
How well does the university embed wellbeing and accessibility into the redevelopment and maintenance of existing properties?			
How well do working and learning spaces support the learning/work undertaken in that space?			
How well are staff and students actively encouraged to engage with nature?			
Do staff and students have access to appropriate social space?			
What information or support is available to help staff and students find their way around campus, for example signage?			

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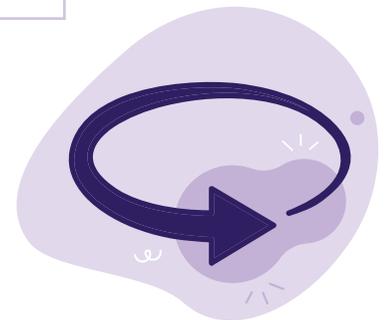
Enabling Themes

People that might be useful to talk to when evaluating this area:

- Vice Chancellor/ Principal
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff
- Disability Teams
- Students' Union Officers and Staff
- Wider Student Body

Evidence that might be useful to consider when evaluating this area:

- Student Lived Experiences
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policies
- Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan
- University Strategy and Policies
- Meeting Minutes
- Student Feedback
- Mental Health Research Outputs



Theme 14: Leadership, Strategy and Policy

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How effectively is a whole-university approach to mental health embedded in day to day practice and culture?			
How evidence-informed is the university's approach to mental health and wellbeing?			
Is the university's approach to mental health and wellbeing co-produced with staff and students, and considerate of mental health across the whole-university?			
How well is the universities' approach to mental health and wellbeing evident in other strategies, policies, procedures, and practices?			
How well is leadership and commitment to mental health demonstrated across the entire organisation?			
How clearly is the universities' approach to mental health linked to its core institutional mission?			

Theme 15: Student Voice and Participation

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How well does the university work in partnership with students to develop mental health related strategy and policy?			
How well does the university work in partnership with students to shape the ongoing development and oversight of support services?			
How well does the university work in partnership with students and staff to create a culture that supports good wellbeing?			
How does the university ensure opportunities for participation and co-creation are clearly structured, supported, safe, and inclusive?			
How well are a diverse range of student and staff voices considered in developing responses to mental health?			
Does the university ensure that peer student-led support interventions are safe, appropriately resourced, and well-managed?			

Theme 16: Cohesiveness Across the Provider

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
Do different support services work together in a way that is cohesive and collaborative?			
How effectively do support services and academic teams work together?			
How is information appropriately shared across the university to support individual students?			
How effective is signposting and triage across the institution?			
How well does the university develop a shared understanding of mental health across different parts of the university community?			

Theme 17: Inclusivity and Intersectional Mental Health

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
How effective is action to understand staff and students' differing needs and experiences?			
How well does the university ensure the culture and environment is inclusive, welcoming, and safe for all members of the university community?			
Does the university provide interventions to remove barriers to good mental health/ wellbeing for groups that face disadvantage or inequalities?			
Does the university provide interventions to remove barriers to good mental health/ wellbeing for groups that face higher-education specific inequalities?			
How well do support services demonstrate cultural competence and sensitivity in responding to different student backgrounds, characteristics, and experiences?			

Theme 18: Research, Innovation and Dissemination

Guiding Questions	What does the university do?	Actions the university can take to improve	
Does the university support research into university mental health and wellbeing and the development of innovative good practice?			
How well does the university support collaboration and sharing of learning about mental health? Between research and practice? Between disciplines? And between universities and other relevant organisations?			
Does the university undertake systematic evaluation of services and interventions to inform decision making?			
How well does the university encourage support services staff to participate in, lead, and share research?			

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Moving Forwards

Well done! Your shared experience and expertise is invaluable to supporting mental health and wellbeing at your institution.

This tool can be used, over time, to monitor and measure ongoing progress towards an excellent whole university approach to mental health. It is recommended that you share any outcomes from previously agreed actions with relevant students, the Students' Union, and university staff.

The conversation doesn't stop here.

Get involved and continue to make a change:

- Find resources on the [University Mental Health Charter website](#)
- Go to the [Student Minds website](#) to find out how you can get involved in transforming the state of student mental health.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to our brilliant Student Panel who designed this tool to empower students to use the Charter to create positive change: Amy Sharpstone, Anna Shabunina, Callum Murdoch, Chelsea Sowden, Emily West, Eoin King, Meg Price, Michael Priestly, Natasha Craven, Shanika Ranasinghe, Zoe Norman. And to Michael Priestley, the student panel member who worked with us to make their ideas a reality.

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Charlie Watkins
Foundation

