

Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference 2024: Better than rocket science! “Futureproofing” student and staff wellbeing

Session abstracts

15 May 2024

Parallel Session 1, 10:55 – 11:55

Session 1.1a

Coffee club: An innovative approach to supporting students to develop a wellbeing toolbox

Margaret Rioga, Buckinghamshire New University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Create @

This will be a 15 minute presentation which will share the positive qualitative research outcomes of wellbeing project which was introduced to enhance the mental wellbeing of learners and reduce the risk of harm and suicide. The project introduced an innovative approach to supporting learner wellbeing by introducing a wellbeing awareness programme informed by Positive Psychology Interventions (PPI) for learners. The project was funded by the North West London Young Adults Mental Health Partnerships and include collaborative working with academic colleagues, the Student Support Services team, Accommodation Team, Student Union, Safeguarding lead and Mental Health Advisor Lead.

Session 1.1b

Cross-service collaboration to develop wellbeing in the curriculum: Multiple experts required!

Gareth Cavill and Dr Lisa Gorton, Leeds Beckett University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Create @

Developed collaboratively by academics, students, and wellbeing practitioners, an entire curriculum that prioritizes mental wellbeing has been co-created at Leeds Beckett University. Presented by a Wellbeing Practitioner and an Academic, this session hears individual reflections and voices from the collective design journey. Shared perspectives, lessons learnt, myths debunked, and encounters that built trust across the academic-service divide are explored and related.

Session 1.1c

AI & mental health: Developing a predictive approach to mental health in students

Susan Lory, Solent University and Dr Olufemi Isiaq, UAL Creative Computing Institute

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Create @

There is growing pressure on Universities to respond quicker and intervene earlier with our students' mental health, with some expectations now beginning to turn to undertaking predictive work; how we can be predict themes, trends or deteriorations in our students wellbeing. This session will show the collaborative work being undertaken at Solent University between the AI Academic Unit and the Therapy and Mental Health Team in developing an AI tool that can predict deteriorations in the wellbeing/mental health of groups

of students; that can inform policy, resources and helping to target early intervention work to vulnerable groups of students.

Session 1.2a

Implementation and evaluation of Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds as a form of wellbeing focused reflective practice

Dr Amy Zile, Associate Professor Georgia Panagiotaki and Associate Professor Joel Owen, University of East Anglia

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Inspire @

In this project, we are evaluating Interprofessional Schwartz Rounds in Higher Education for healthcare students, with a view to helping understand whether and how the benefits previously reported literature translate into an educational setting. This may be particularly important given evidence that students need environments that encourage discussion and mentoring, promoting the sensitivity and awareness that lead to better care. Across the project, we aim to answer questions regarding who attends Rounds, who benefits the most, and to explore the experience of taking part in Rounds, to evaluate the potential for Rounds to contribute positively towards wellbeing and retention.

Session 1.2b

Development of a University-based Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service for students

Dr Fiona Gullon-Scott, Newcastle University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Inspire @

This session will outline the development and evaluation of Newcastle University's Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service (NDAS). NDAS is a unique in-house diagnostic and support service for autism/ADHD for students, enabling free timely assessments, providing detailed recommendations, and linking directly with Student Health and Wellbeing teams. NDAS offers post-diagnostic support, delivers training around supporting neurodivergent students, and undertakes research exploring improved understanding and support of neurodivergent students' mental health. Overseen by a clinic board from Clinical Psychology Doctorate, Student Health and Wellbeing, local neurodivergent clinicians, and neurodivergent students, NDAS is a model that could be mirrored across HE institutions.

Session 1.2c

Embedding resilience and mental wellbeing into the curriculum: Outcomes, reflections and recommendations

Dr Jen Stockdale and Dr Maria Toledo-Rodriguez, University of Nottingham

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Inspire @

Helping university students develop resilience and self-efficacy will become as important as disciplinary knowledge. We took a proactive approach to embed a growth mindset and mental wellbeing within the Foundation Science core skills module and tutorial programme. Students developed transferable skills and gained awareness of the positive impact on mental health of non-pharmacological and affordable/inclusive interventions such as sleep, physical exercise and nutrition. Students' levels of resilience were assessed twice using the Resilience Scale for Young Adults, along with questions on lifestyle and development of growth mindset. Results suggest a positive effect of our curriculum-based intervention on students' mental resilience.

Session 1.3a

Understanding graduate teaching assistants' wellbeing, agency, and identity: How can we better support PhD students who teach?

Dr Hannah Slack, King's College London

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Think @

The wellbeing of students and staff in Higher Education has received increased attention in pedagogical research. However, the experiences of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), or PhD students who teach, have been notably absent. In this mixed-methods study, we examined the predictors of GTA's wellbeing in UK institutions, and qualitatively explored their identity management practices. Two dominant themes emerged (1), the 'paradox of credibility', whereby GTAs reported a concern to be perceived as credible whilst also managing student expectations about their knowledge, and (2) GTAs' desire to use their staff-student role to engage in 'approachability and advocacy' with and for students.

Session 1.3b

Lessons from the first year co-leading as Associate Deans Wellbeing, Inclusion, Diversity and Equality (ADWIDE)

Alie Hilda de Vries and Juliette Summers, University of Stirling

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Think@

A NEW role means a blank sheet of paper. Alie Hilda and Juliette were given the opportunity to fill such a blank sheet when they became the first Co-Associate Deans Wellbeing, Inclusion, Diversity and Equality (WIDE) of the Stirling Management School. Our presentation will share our vision, what we have achieved in our first year and some obstacles we are facing. Although the remit of our role extends to staff and students, our session will focus on staff wellbeing, including the impact of increasing overseas student numbers at PG level – something we know is replicated across the HE sector.

Session 1.3c

Menopause, mental well-being and the workplace: Moving beyond the taboo

Dr Katrina Forbes-McKay, Robert Gordon University and Linda Engles, University of Aberdeen

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Think@

Given the ever-growing proportion of women aged 46-55 in the Higher Education workforce, this session highlights the need to enhance our understanding and support for menopausal women. Menopause brings various symptoms which negatively impact work productivity, intention to leave and mental wellbeing, yet workplace support remains inadequate and ill-informed. This is amplified by a fear of menopause status disclosure due to age-related bias and a reluctance to disclose to male colleagues. The session aims to foster understanding, stimulate open discussion around Menopause, encourage staff to raise issues of disclosure, support, and policy at their institutions to future proof staff well-being.

Parallel Session 2, 12:10 – 12:50

Session 2.1

A UK study on student suicide in universities: Training and support implications for frontline staff

Dr Sonia Kalsi, Private practice

Interactive Workshop session (40 minutes), Create@

Student suicide, now a pressing global challenge (Universities UK & Papyrus, 2018), has garnered substantial attention from mental health professionals in universities, particularly in the UK (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011). My doctoral research, which explored therapists' experiences of working with suicidal students in UK universities, found that universities are grappling with more complex and severe mental health presentations in the student population, coupled with growing demands for counselling services. This workshop draws on findings from my research, providing insights into the challenges of supporting suicidal students in a university setting and exploring training and support implications for frontline staff.

Session 2.2

Next steps in student wellbeing data and metrics: Updates from the SCORE and SHARE projects

Dr Emma Broglia, University of Sheffield, and Robert Scruggs, BACP

Interactive Workshop session (40 minutes), Think @

During this workshop delegates will explore student wellbeing data and metrics, including the value, and obstacles, in collecting useful, high-quality data. We will present briefly on 3 projects which are developing our understanding of the data needs of the sector including: students' experiences of using measures (SHARE); designing a national minimum data set for the sector (SCORE-MDS); and using data to explore the relationship between problems, counselling and academic experiences (SCORE-CIAO).

We invite you to contribute your insights and needs, shaping our ongoing research and guiding recommendations tailored to meet the diverse needs of both staff and students. How do you currently assess and address student mental health and well-being? What one thing would make your job easier in addressing (and reporting) student well-being?

By the end of this workshop, you will gain early insights into this ongoing research and contribute to the development of practical recommendations that aim to enhance the mental health support framework for staff and students alike. Join us in shaping a more holistic and effective approach to reporting mental health and well-being on campus.

For more information see <https://sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/share/home> and <https://score-consortium.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/>

Parallel Session 3, 14:15 – 14:55

Session 3.1

Improving wellbeing by reducing apprehension about novel situations or teaching experiences

Dr Ashley Le Vin and Dr Emma Bailey, University of Glasgow

Interactive Workshop session (40 minutes), Create @

Increasingly we are seeing students suffering poor mental health as well as having a wide range of neurodivergent students. Improving wellbeing and ensuring inclusivity is of great importance to ensure students reach their academic potential. In this workshop, attendees will gain ideas of simple to create resources that can reduce student, or even staff, apprehension about novel situations or teaching experiences that may be barriers to learning/participation. In small groups, attendees will discuss new, easy to implement ideas of resources they could create for their own students to try and reduce apprehensions or barriers to learning/participation.

Session 3.2

Embedding compassion in the HE curriculum: Using compassionate communication to support wellbeing and inclusivity

Dr Caroline Harvey and Professor Frances Maratos, University of Derby

Interactive Workshop session (40 minutes), Inspire @

In this session, we will overview our approach, demonstrating how compassionate communication skills can be embedded in the HE curriculum. We will outline the activities used and explain how we introduce these with our students. Further, we will introduce delegates to helpful and unhelpful group behaviours (e.g., monopolising discussions; a lack of engagement etc.) and will discuss how to work with students to explore reasons for these

behaviours and techniques to address them. The latest research findings will be shared, highlighting the positive impact this pedagogic approach has for students.

Session 3.3

The benefits of institution specific mental health awareness training for all student-facing staff

Dr Ruth Collins, Oxford University

Interactive Workshop session (40 minutes), Think@

With increasing numbers of students reporting mental health issues, academic and academic-related staff, who may feel ill-equipped to deal with such issues, are being approached in the first instance. At Oxford, Mental Health Awareness training is actively promoted with all student-facing staff encouraged to attend. Making institution specific training available to all student-facing staff benefits not only students, but additionally protects the wellbeing of staff. This interactive workshop overviews the key features of the training, along with the reported impact from staff. A case-study based activity involving a role-play will highlight the benefits of training for both students and staff.

Parallel Session 4, 15:10 – 16:10

Session 4.1a

Collaborative wellbeing template to support students in practice

Dr Kelly Walker and Sarah Drake, University of East Anglia

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Create@

Reports from practice educators and students suggest that students are reluctant to disclose any wellbeing concerns, as they fear these will impact on their assessment/ experience whilst on placement. However, a growing number of wellbeing concerns are evident in the student population. The aim of the collaboratively created wellbeing templates is to facilitate ways in which to support students to feel able to discuss these concerns prior to commencing practice placement. The hope is this early open discussion will enable practice educators to offer sufficient support and avoid fails on placement that are triggered by wellbeing issues.

Session 4.1b

Mental health and wellbeing interventions and collaboration: Stepped care model at NTU

Jemma Cropper and Joanne Smith, Nottingham Trent University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Create@

A look at how adopting a stepped care model approach within wellbeing and mental health services at NTU has led to increased collaboration, and effective support interventions.

Session 4.1c

Enrolment to employment: Equipped, empowered, and enabled - Supporting nursing and midwifery students with a lived experience of a disabling condition to develop skills and strategies for transition into high skilled employment

Associate Professor Christine Nightingale, University Of Suffolk

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Create@

This session will explore the process and progress of a participative action research project at the University of Suffolk which focusses on the needs of disabled nursing and midwifery learners who are seeking and transitioning into employment. This presentation will explore: the project's action research approach, the challenges and emerging findings particularly those that relate to learners who experience poor mental health and/or have a diagnosed

mental illness. the experiences of working collaboratively with academics, professional services staff, academic administrators, and student support teams.

Session 4.2a

Connecting young and old: Strengthening learning and wellbeing in a positive psychology course

Dr Kathleen HM Chim, Hong Kong Metropolitan University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Inspire@

The application of positive psychology in education, health, and workplace to promote optimal functioning, wellbeing, and flourishing is gaining considerable attention in recent years. Originally designed for Psychology major students, the 45-hour credit-bearing course 'Positive Psychology and Personal Growth' has evolved into a general education course currently attended by students from different disciplines. Starting from 2023, the course has also been offered to senior students (aged 55/+) of our university's Elder Academy as part of a pilot scheme of intergenerational learning. This scheme is expected to expand to bring more psychological, social, emotional and economic benefits to the learning community.

Session 4.2b

Holistic approach to embed wellbeing in the curriculum

Dr Ishwinder Kaur, Nottingham Trent University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Inspire@

Bringing holistic wellbeing into the curriculum that supports staff will nurture the students. This case study by Dr Ishwinder kaur from Nottingham Trent university shows the impact of coaching tools on student well being. To scale up the program staff wellbeing is being explored to synchronise the process of empowering staff in such a way that would equip staff to apply the wellbeing tools to their own lives as well nurture their students with the tools and strategies.

Session 4.2c

Embedding student wellbeing in continuous assessment practices

Dr Tracey Reimann-Dawe, Durham University

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Inspire@

Across the UK HE sector we are seeing a shift towards summative continuous assessment in addition to, or in place of, end of year exams. This change is underpinned by pedagogical benefits and the need for increased inclusivity: to enable diversification of assessment, increase flexibility and alleviate learner stress and anxiety relating to heavily-weighted exams. Measuring the success of continuous assessment currently relies heavily on student performance metrics. This session will give insight into an ongoing study of assessment practices that seeks to gauge the holistic impacts of continuous assessment on student wellbeing.

Session 4.3a

The wise mind group and videos: Supporting students with emotional sensitivity and distress

Dr Helen Winter, University Health Service, Sheffield

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Think@

Students may present in crisis or feeling distressed and overwhelmed due to difficulties with emotional sensitivity. There may be a history of an invalidating or traumatic background, and symptoms may be exacerbated at times of transition. The Wise Mind Group is a student educational and peer supported group developed at University Health Service, Sheffield. The group aims to improve understanding of emotional sensitivity, and to explore evidence-based DBT skills to help manage difficult feelings and emotions. A video version of the Wise

Mind Group content has been recorded, to allow the information to be more widely accessible to students.

Session 4.3b

Embedding Resilience in the Language Curriculum and preparation for the Year Abroad

Dr Mariana Bonnouvrier, University of Bath

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Think@

This presentation will offer an overview of the new challenges faced by students in the context of the Year Abroad, a compulsory element in most universities' languages degrees. It will highlight and evaluate some of the initiatives we have attempted to implement at Bath and is intended at any academics and support officers whose roles require helping students involved in a placement or exchange. The session also intends to lead to a fruitful conversation on how we can create new ways of helping students develop resilience at university and become more prepared to tackle other challenging transitions in their lives.

Session 4.3c

The experience of design and delivery of relaxation sessions in an immersive room environment for staff and student wellbeing: Reflections and recommendations

Claire Whitehouse, Finn Drude and Jacqueline Bowyer, University of Cumbria

Oral Presentation (15 minutes), Think@

Immerse yourself in innovation! Join our 15-minute presentation at the Mental Wellbeing Conference, where we unveil an exclusive monthly immersive relaxation session designed for Higher Education Institutions. Developed collaboratively by simulation experts and a physiotherapy academic, this transformative experience combines technology, nature, and mindfulness to enhance staff mental wellbeing. Discover practical insights and gain a blueprint for integrating this unique approach into your institution. Elevate wellness, foster resilience, and revolutionize mental health initiatives in higher education. Don't miss this opportunity to be at the forefront of progressive practices.