

Mental Health Training for Academics & Support Staff

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Union Notes:

1. The 2013 NUS Mental Distress Survey – 10% of students reported a diagnosed mental illness.¹
1. A 2016 Unite survey - 12% consider themselves to have a mental illness, such as depression, schizophrenia or an anxiety disorder.²
2. The Unite report – 32% reported that in the previous four weeks they had 'always' or 'often' felt 'down or depressed' and 30% reported 'always' or 'often' feeling 'isolated or lonely'
3. 92% of students attending University counselling sessions were having problems completing their academic work³
4. Appropriate support helps improve student retention rate - A 2012 survey found that when students received support for their Mental Health problems 81% said it helped them complete their studies (saving the University money in otherwise lost fees) 79% thought it helped them do better in their academic work and 78% thought it had helped them develop skills useful for obtaining employment⁴
5. Liberation groups need specific forms of support; both NUS and YouGov found that students from Liberation groups had a higher prevalence than other students. For example, YouGov found in 2016 that 45% of LGBT* students reported challenges with their Mental Health as opposed to 22% of non-LGBT* students⁵
6. The University has recently begun to finally establish a new wellbeing service
7. Our own SU Advice service is able to triage, signpost and deal with low level issues
8. However, students often need to be directed to these services in the first instance
9. Academic staff and sometimes University support staff are often on the frontlines and often the first point of contact for students

Union Believes:

1. Student Mental Health is the one of the primary challenges being tackled across HE and the Student Movement
2. There is no single solution, and a whole plethora of policies and initiatives are required to begin to tackle the epidemic
3. It remains an open question across the sector as to where the burden of responsibility falls between Unions, Universities and the NHS
4. Nonetheless having University staff receive accredited Mental Health First Aid training, within the first 12 months of employment would undoubtedly be an important step toward ameliorating the current crisis

¹ National Union of Students, Mental Distress Survey Overview, May 2013.

² Unite, Student Resilience: Unite Students Insight Report, August 2016.

³ Karen McKenzie et al, 'The effectiveness of university counselling for students with academic issues', *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 15:4, 2015.

⁴ Patti Wallace, 'The impact of counselling on academic outcomes: the student perspective', *British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, November 2012.

⁵ YouGov, Student Mental Health Overview, July 2016.

5. Having University staff trained in such a way would instil them with the confidence to be able to appropriately signpost students and support them in finding the right avenue to pursue
6. Whether or not staff receive training, they will often be the first point of disclosure, so it is better that they are trained to deal the situation
7. This is not to turn staff into counsellors or too assume that they can in any way stand-in for qualified and trained Mental Health professionals

Union Resolves:

1. To lobby the University to ensure all academic staff attend mandatory Mental Health First Aid training within the first 12 months of their employment – and to ensure all current staff receive the same training before the start of the 2020/2021 academic year
2. To mandate both the Vice President and President to lead on this work, alongside the mental health officer
3. To mandate the Vice President and Mental Health officer to explore other large-scale solutions to the HE mental health crisis. Taking into account best practise from across the sector
4. To ensure that all staff receive a refresher in this training at least every 3 years