



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Staff and Student

Background Context and Vision

Cranfield is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment which enables our community of students and staff to achieve and sustain positive mental health and wellbeing. Recognising that many factors contribute towards positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to provide responsive and timely support, shaping our services to meet the needs of our diverse community, in conjunction with a focus on proactive preventative interventions supporting the development of healthy behaviours and future resilience.

Figures show, that in the UK, it is estimated that one in six workers are currently dealing with a mental health condition at work, whilst one in four people are affected by mental ill-health each year. In terms of tangible statistics, Universities UK report that for students this equates to 500,000 students per year and for employers, the Government estimate costs associated with mental health are in the region of £33 to £42 billion¹. Other figures show that 50% of chronic adult mental illness starts in the teenage years, and 75% before the age of 24 and given this, Universities UK note that as participation in higher education in the UK has expanded, national trends in mental ill-health among young people are being seen in our student populations.

Mental ill health can have many consequences. It has strong links with a lack of wellbeing, distress and self-harm and chronic mental illness can change lives, disrupt education and employability. It effects not just the individual who is experiencing the difficulties, but their families, friends and colleagues, communities and workplaces. Conversely, **positive wellbeing enhances** an individual's engagement, satisfaction, and performance, enabling them to flourish and achieve their full potential.

Universities UK advocate a whole university approach to mental health (this approach being informed by a number of frameworks for health promotion including the Healthy Universities framework, which was developed in the UK with support from the Higher Education Funding Council of England). How Universities understand and approach mental health is at the heart of this, including how students and staff are enabled to thrive and realise their potential as well as how those in crisis or experiencing mental illness are supported. In order to support higher education institutions in adopting this approach, Universities UK have developed a framework - Universities UK #stepchange², which provides the underlying structure for Universities to adapt to their context and needs, building on engagement with staff and students. This approach has been endorsed further by the Mental Health Charter³, developed by Student Minds, in partnership with Universities UK (UUK), the National Union of Students and AMOSSHE, the student services organisation, with funding and support from the Office for Students (OfS).

Cranfield's strategy, based on the above, references the strategic themes proposed by Universities UK for supporting mental health in higher education and aims to provide the foundation and structure for the University to support mental health and wellbeing, for both staff and students, to enhance the 'Cranfield experience'. It also captures current practice and outlines planned developments to

¹ Thriving at Work: a review of mental health and employers - An independent review of mental health and employers by Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer.

²[Universities UK StepChange framework](#) has been developed to support higher education senior teams to adopt a whole university approach to mental health. Institutions can adapt the framework to add context, build on strong engagement with students and staff and a robust evaluation of need.

³Mental Health Charter – Hughes, G. & Spanner, L. (2019). The University Mental Health Charter. Leeds: Student Minds

enhance the provision. Cranfield joined the University Mental Health Charter Programme in 2024 to further enhance practice and cultural change.

Objectives

- Establish a “whole university” approach, engaging our diverse staff and student community in raising awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing.
- Use research, data and feedback to understand the areas of need and risk, monitor progress and inform enhancement to services.
- Provide information, advice and guidance to staff and students at key transition points, to manage risk and prevent mental ill-health.
- Promote a positive environment for work (academic and non-academic) and study that is conducive to positive mental wellbeing.
- Encourage inclusivity and academic integration in the learning environment to engage students.
- Develop an environment where all individuals feel comfortable to discuss mental health, deepen their knowledge and understanding, and seek support to manage and maintain their own wellbeing.
- Review and develop health and wellbeing initiatives and training interventions that meet the needs of staff and students.
- Deliver effective support services where early identification of those at risk, is proactively addressed through effective communication, escalation routes and co-ordinated support.
- Build on existing engagement with external support providers both to foster collaborative partnerships and signpost services.

Our Strategy

Our strategy goes further than just maintaining the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students. It is about the University’s commitment to an individual’s health and wellbeing, setting out our aims, and ensuring that managers, individuals and others understand the importance and value of proactively managing mental health. It also covers health promotion initiatives, communicating and training on health issues, the range of support available and organisational commitment to handling individual issues.

Cranfield is committed to providing a working and living environment for its community which minimises risk to health and promotes positive wellbeing. We see mental health and wellbeing as as important as physical health and the University aims to support and provide managers and individuals with the understanding, skills and experiences to manage their needs. By working together we can build a community, where our staff and students thrive and where mental health and wellbeing are embedded in our ethos, culture, values and practices.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with:

- The Mental Health Wellbeing Working Groups (Student and Staff)
- Executive Sponsor (Student and Staff)
- The University Executive
- Our Trade Unions and Student Support Body
- Engagement from our staff and students via various channels to include surveys (Pulse Survey for staff and PRES/PTES and Pulse surveys for students).

We have a number of policies, procedures and initiatives already in place to support staff and students’ health and wellbeing and review these regularly to ensure they support and underpin this strategy and looking ahead, intend to engage further through our established network groups and by holding focus groups.

We recognise that our staff and students come from a range of backgrounds, with differing cultures, beliefs and circumstances and will ensure that any recommendations and outcomes are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all.

Foundations of our Wellbeing Strategy

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| Leadership | The University has a duty of care to our staff and are concerned about the care and wellbeing of all of our students. This includes safeguarding the welfare of children, adults “at risk”, and protecting those most vulnerable as outlined in our Safeguarding Policy . With senior leadership endorsement in embedding a shared culture and environment to support change and individual wellbeing, the associated Committees and network groups will bring together both academic and support staff alongside members of our CSA and Trade Unions, to reflect a “whole university” approach to the continued development and enhancement of the health and mental wellbeing agenda and action plan. |
| Data and research | Combining our existing data, with feedback from staff and students on their experience, (looking at the visibility and the effectiveness of the support services for mental health and wellbeing), alongside sector best practice, to help monitor and adapt our provision to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our diverse communities. |
| Effective and appropriate support | <p>Connecting and communicating our support provision to both communities, ensuring visibility and ease of access to a wide range of services.</p> <p>Regularly review the mental health provision and its impact, recognising that our services need to be flexible to meet the changing needs of our community and wider society, for example those with neurodivergent needs, individuals requiring trauma and post incident support etc.</p> |
| Prevention and early intervention | <p>By encouraging a culture of awareness, open conversations and a greater understanding of mental health and wellbeing, we can help identify early on, those at risk. While some may have pre-existing mental health conditions, others may develop mental ill-health whilst working or studying at the University.</p> <p>By promoting an inclusive and supportive environment with regular opportunities for our community to seek help, in conjunction with ensuring our support services are accessible to all, we hope to encourage early disclosure. This enables timely, appropriate support and resources to be available and minimises the effect such periods of mental and physical ill health have.</p> |
| Partnership working | Further developing our existing links between the University support services and national and local primary care and mental health services, at both a strategic and operational level, This will further support staff and students to access support and where appropriate care and allow for the better coordination of that care. |
| Key Transitions | With a diverse population it is important to recognise the impact when individuals disclose pre-existing conditions or new concerns and worries. Identifying key transition points in the staff and student life cycle, alongside the differing profiles (e.g. mature, international, BME), to better target the visibility of the support services. |

To support delivery of the above elements, further develop existing action plans informed by the Staff Engagement Survey, the Mental Health Charter Programme, insights from our absence data, OH/counselling referrals, Report and Support data and approaches to our Mental Health First Aiders provision.

Related policies and resources:

This wellbeing strategy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures, including:

For staff; policies on; flexible working, attendance and absence policies and procedures and our [diversity policies](#).

For students; our [Senate Student Welfare Handbook](#) alongside our policies on; Student Disability, Safeguarding, Mental Health and the [Fitness to Study contained therein, together with Student Attendance/Engagement monitoring](#).

Other related resources:

| Staff | Student |
|---|---|
| Employee Handbook Intranet wellbeing pages Employee benefits Health and Safety policies and procedures including the University Stress Risk Assessment Mental Health First Aiders Safeguarding Policy Reasonable Adjustments Guidance Values and Behaviours Report and Support Supporting your workload Financial wellbeing Appendix 1 shows current wellbeing initiatives already undertaken at the University for staff. | The Senate Handbook on Student Welfare contains a number of policies, including: Student Disability Policy Policy for supporting dyslexic students and those with other SLDs Mental Health Policy Fitness to Study Policy Code of Practice on Valuing Diversity Dignity at Cranfield Policy Safeguarding Policy Student Wellbeing and Disability Support (SWaDS) Confidentiality Policy Togetherall online 24/7 support Your wellbeing student pages with information on common mental health conditions, signs, symptoms, suicide prevention and sources of support including university counselling, services. Student Charter “Working Together” Report and Support Appendix 2 shows current wellbeing initiatives already undertaken at the University for students. |

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Document Review

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| V1 | Document creation | Head of Student Support and Wellbeing/ Head of HR Compliance, Policy and Data. | March 2020 |
| V2 | Refresh of document to include signing up to the Mental Health Charter | Head of Student Support and Wellbeing/Head of Talent and culture/Deputy Director of People and Culture/ | July 2024 |



Staff wellbeing

The following are examples of current staff wellbeing initiatives

Staff support

- Staff benefits.
- Dignity at work policies and Advisors.
- Flexible working.
- Holiday entitlement.
- P&DR.
- Diversity and inclusion.
- Athena Swan.
- Sickness absence support and monitoring.
- Unions representatives.
- Embedded HR teams.
- Step Up Network.
- Technicians Forum.
- Mental Health First Aiders.
- Race Equality Charter.
- Cranfield Disability Network.
- Q at Cranfield.
- EmbRace.
- Parents and Carers Network.
- Apprentice Network.
- Menopause Support Group.
- Early Careers Researchers.
- Report and Support.
- Hybrid working.

Health and safety risk management

- 18001 certified.
- Inspection processes.
- Auditing-internal and external.
- Reporting procedure.
- Governance arrangements.
- Trade Union safety reps.
- Stress risk assessment.

Physical and mental health

- Welbeing workshops and sessions.
- 1-2-1 health checks to include – ‘know your numbers’, mindfulness and lifestyle.
- Physiotherapy – subsidised/ free.
- DSE assessment and eye care.
- Employee assistance programme to include provision for counselling.
- First aiders.
- OH and wellbeing referrals.

Environment

- On-site health facilities (gym, classes).
- Health walks.
- Green/environmental group.
- Cafes and food outlets.
- Social areas and events.
- Special interest groups.

Culture

- Values and behaviours.
- EDI and Wellbeing Committee.

Line manager support

- Mental health at work line manager guide.
- One-to-ones with staff.
- Business disability forum advice line.
- Mental health e-guidance (awareness module).

Learning and development

- Mentoring.
- Training for Management – H&S and work-related stress.
- Working Life Hub.
- ‘Focus, Plan, Do it’.
- CUTE training.
- ‘Building personal resilience’ workshop.
- Workload management and resources ([Managing Workload](#)).
- LinkedIn Learning.
- Coaching skills workshop.
- Coaching provision.
- Feedback skills workshops.



Student wellbeing

The following are examples of current student wellbeing initiatives

Student Wellbeing and Disability Support core initiatives

- Student advisors offering 121 information, advice and support.
- Learning Support co-ordinating course reasonable adjustments and return to study support.
- Guidance to staff on student mental health and wellbeing cases.
- Central co-ordination of student risk register, case escalation and emergency contact procedures.
- Policies; Fitness to study, Disability, Mental Health, Dyslexia Policies.
- Counselling services.
- Safeguarding.

Course team support

- SAS Lead guidance on university policy, Exceptional circumstances, extensions, suspensions (which may be mental health related).
- Dignity at Study.
- Code of Practice on Valuing Diversity.

Pastoral Advisors (Research students)

- Provides advice and support on matters not directly related to the degree such as health, welfare and well-being matters.

Physical and mental health

- External Needs assessments, screening tool for specific learning differences (SpLD).
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and ESFA for apprenticeship students application and implementation.
- Learning Support Offices co-ordinated course adjustment (Student Support Plan) and external support services.
- Mental Health First Aiders.

Environment

- Social areas and events e.g. 'De-stress day', on-campus accommodation space (internal and external).
- On-site health facilities (gym, classes).
- CSA clubs and societies.

Culture

- Student Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Bystander Awareness online module.
- Pre-sessional English course – new student workshop which includes introduction to UK health and wellbeing services.

Learning and development

- Student workshops (e.g. Stress management, Nutrition and health etc).
- Staff workshops e.g. 'Mental health in the context of supporting Cranfield students' and 'Dyslexia awareness'.

External

- Togetherall.
- NHS partnership working including; Community Mental Health, Early Intervention and Crisis teams.
- Community Mental Health Team.
- Bedfordshire Wellbeing Service.
- Non-medical services including those funded through DSA.