Identification of students at-risk

Introduction

Whilst the incidence of poor mental wellbeing amongst students continues to surge, the lower level of mental health disclosures by students results in HEPs often responding to students' needs only when they exhibit an escalation of symptoms. This means early intervention is more difficult to operationalise, often leaving HEPs reactive.

Analytics

One solution is the development of wellbeing analytics to enable HEPs to identify students who have a heightened risk of developing poor wellbeing. This facilitates proactive signposting or intervention before students' needs become more serious.

A significant number of HEPs are planning to introduce or enhance their student analytics. This is not straightforward. Alignment of internal data systems takes time. Resources are stretched. Few commercial suppliers are offering solutions. Better data collection, analysis and dissemination requires changes to the broader student support systems within HEPs (and there is a related piece of work being undertaken independently by Professor Edward Peck in his role as the Higher Education Student Support Champion).

Alternate methods

For some smaller HEPs, the costs and complexity of analytics may be significant and alternative methods of ensuring identification of students at risk may exist.

A 'community' approach may be more effective or appropriate for smaller HEPs. This approach is characterised by smaller class sizes and more regular – or consistent – interactions between a teacher and students, enabling effective early warning of risk.

Furthermore, a number of HEPs routinely survey students on their health and wellbeing. This enables the identification – and intervention thereof – students who are exhibiting the early signs of poor wellbeing or mental distress.

We recognise that methods outside of the community/self-report/analytics approaches are likely to exist and will be subject to further investigation.

Taskforce Objective

- To review the alternatives to analytics that may be more suitable for some categories of HEPs whilst delivering the same insights and interventions.

- To consider and develop a plan to support the wider adoption of wellbeing analytics by HEPs in the light of consideration of current obstacles.

Proposed Work Programme

- Consultation (July-December)
    - To consider with HEMHIT members and relevant sector stakeholders, the most effective and meaningful interventions by the Taskforce to encourage and enable demonstration of wide adoption of wellbeing analytics or, where appropriate, other methods of identifying students at risk.

Under the direction of the Taskforce, a roundtable will be scheduled to progress this strand, consisting of both members and other relevant stakeholders. A report will be submitted in December 2023 which will set out the proposed way forward.

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