



Supporting Adoption of Good Practice

Introduction

In recent years, significant research, evidence, and specialist input have informed the development of good practice guidance on student mental health and wellbeing. However, good practice is not always implemented consistently by HE providers (HEPs), or cannot be always shown to be so. Furthermore, this guidance has been issued piecemeal and there is now benefit in reviewing how comprehensive it is, assessing how much it has been adopted, and suggesting what would encourage implementation.

Much good practice is contained in the University Mental Health Charter, the importance of which has been highlighted recently by the Minister. Any HEP with degree awarding powers can sign up to the Charter Programme which is run by Student Minds and was designed in conjunction with UUK. The Minister has asked all universities to sign-up by September 2024.

The Charter Award is the assessment arm of the Charter Programme. Through a rigorous process, it determines whether universities have demonstrated excellent approaches to student and staff mental health, alongside a commitment to improve and develop better practice in university mental health. To date, seven universities have received the full award, whilst others have been given it with conditions. Given the signing-up date has been brought forward, Student Minds is considering the timescale for and implications of enabling these HEPs to go through the Charter Award process.

Some eligible institutions suggest the Charter Programme is not necessarily appropriate for smaller HEPs. The Association of Colleges (AoC) has its own Mental Health and Wellbeing Charter. Independent Higher Education (IHE) does not have a formal scheme as present. If every student in higher education is to be covered by a good practice Charter, then there needs to be a baseline expectation here.

Taskforce Objectives

- To review current good practice guidance to ensure it is comprehensive, consider how far it had been implemented, and identify ways of accelerating adoption.
- To establish the baseline approach that will ensure all HE students are covered by a robust Charter regime regardless of where they study.
- To advise on further developments of specific mental health charters that are proposed to deliver that coverage.

Proposed Work Programme

- Consultation (July-December)
 - To review the current landscape of guidance and evidence of adoption and make recommendations that enhance both.
 - To suggest methods by which evidence of adoption of good practice guidance can be collected more routinely.
 - To articulate the framework and baseline content within which every student within an HEP will be covered by an appropriate charter by a specified date.

The Taskforce will reflect on progress in October and look to agree proposals in December; please refer to the 2023 workplan for more information.

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