PART OF THE LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Torrens University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all students. The University’s Student Mental Health and Wellness Framework has been developed in accordance with the World Health Organisation Health Promoting Universities framework. We are guided by the principles of the Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting University and Colleges:

- Support personal development
- Create supportive campus environments
- Equitable access to campus health services
- Strengthen community action
- Health promotion research, teaching and training
- Integrate health, wellbeing and sustainability
- Healthy campus policies
- Partnerships for health promotion

Approach

In its role as employer and educator for some 1700 staff and 14,000 students, Torrens acknowledges its contribution to helping to promote health and wellbeing to its large and diverse student community.

Torrens is further committed to creating healthy working and learning environments for students of the university. We do this by combining existing strategies for the health and wellbeing of the university community and by offering opportunities to University staff and students to collaborate, coordinate, and participate in healthy activities and projects.

This framework draws upon the Enhancing Student Wellbeing Project which forms the basis of the TEQSA Wellbeing and Safety requirements.

Action Areas from the Enhancing Student Wellbeing Framework:

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Action Area One: Engaging curricula and learning experiences

**Goal:** To promote student mental health and wellbeing with a supportive curricula and learning experiences that afford choice and flexibility in approach, create social connections, build competence and foster intrinsic motivation.

**Activities**

1.1 Embed resources into the curriculum of each program to support the students’ wellbeing and learning experiences working with the support of our Deans and Program Innovation team.
1.2 Promote teaching and learning resources that support student health and wellbeing
1.3 Engage in research on teaching practices that support student wellbeing

**Measures of Success**

- Proportion of degree programs that offer flexible course loads and progression
- NPS and SESL student survey mechanisms that provide commentary on the quality of feedback received in assessment
- Active research undertaken to inform and support teaching that will have a positive impact on student wellbeing.

Action Area Two: Supportive Environments

**Goal:** Support the health and wellbeing of students by creating and maintaining healthy organisational, learning, cultural, social and natural environments.

**Activities**

2.1 Update and expand online mental health and wellbeing resources, and ensure content is accessible for all students
2.2 Training for staff to support student mental health and wellbeing
2.3 Student mental health and wellbeing needs analysis

**Measures of Success**

- Proportion of students who report a sense of belonging to the university community and proportion of students participating in extra-curricular group activities
- Proportion of students who have actively engaged with resources
- Ratio of quiet spaces for private study, physical spaces for collaborative learning and social interaction, and facilities to (on-campus) student population
Action Area Three: Strengthen Community Awareness

Goal: Provide students with information, resources and skills needed to take greater control of their mental health and wellbeing.

Activities

3.1 Promote Student Wellbeing services at each campus throughout the semester

3.2 Encourage and facilitate student participation in activities and programs offered across a range of mental health and wellbeing issues

3.3 Regular mental health promotion awareness-raising campaigns

Measures of Success

- Number of, and participation in, student-led activities related to university life in general, as well as student mental wellbeing
- Proportion of vertical/campus/organisational committees with student participation and representation
- Number of, and student participation in, activities and campaigns related to mental health and wellbeing

Action Area Four: Access to Services

Goal: Create and maintain services that enhance mental health and wellbeing and support equitable access across campuses.

Activities

4.1 Promoting and ensuring access to student support services; providing individual and group support

4.2 Conduct wellbeing forums/focus groups to inform data-driven service delivery that addresses the identified needs of students

4.3 Increasing engagement with external mental health and NDIS service providers

4.4 Pursue appropriate referrals to relevant Mental Health professionals where required

Measures of Success:

- Measuring average waiting times for services and ratio of the number of counsellors to the student population
- Feedback from students on the quality of services and potential future directions
- Students demonstrating awareness of their wellbeing and utilising resources when applying for special consideration related to mental wellbeing
Action Area Five: Develop Students’ Mental Health Knowledge and skills

Goal: Develop and create opportunities to build mental health knowledge and skills so students are engaged and thriving in both their academic and personal pursuits.

5.1 Face to face training: wellbeing drop-ins, mental health awareness

5.2 Peer-led skills development: mental health and wellbeing training for student leaders and student groups

5.3 Investigate opportunities to incorporate topics related to mental health, mental illness or mental health organisations into assessment items

Measures of Success

- Number of, and participation in, co-curricular programs related to developing personal knowledge and self-regulatory skills (e.g. self-management, resilience, employability competencies)
- Availability and take-up of programs and information that build resilience and self-management
- Proportion of units embedding health promoting knowledge and skills for mental wellbeing

Torrens University Student Mental Health and Wellbeing for International Students

In consideration of our student demographics and our commitment to the international student cohort, we wish to further refine our Mental Health Strategy with reference to the National Code and the English Australia Guide to Best Practice in International Student Mental Health 2018.

Of particular interest for consideration are the following areas of identified concern:

- Nature of mental health issues identified as typically afflicting international students and how we can support these:
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Extreme worry
  - Grief related stress
- Written policy and promotion of services
- Staff training
  - Mental Health First Aid training
  - Cultural awareness training for academics and administrative support staff
- Early identification
  - Link to Students at Risk tracking systems
- Reasonable adjustments and Learning Access Plans
In recognition of the importance of having an intentional focus on student mental health and wellbeing, the Torrens community will establish a future Framework to provide an action plan from 2019-2022. Regular reflection and annual evaluation of this framework will enable a nominated team to develop supplementary actions aimed at achieving the broad aspirations of the Framework.

- 2019: Build a multi-campus network to implement action plan
- 2020: Increased collaboration within and beyond Torrens to enhance student mental health and wellbeing
- 2021: Student mental health and wellbeing considered in plans and initiatives across Torrens
- 2022: Refer to measurable university-wide outcomes and benefits

**Implementation and Evaluation**

The responsibility for implementation and evaluation of this strategy resides with the Director of Student Administration and Campus Operations and the National Student Support Manager. The creation of a Mental Health Working Group is recommended that would be comprised of students, staff and key University stakeholders and chaired by a senior Executive. It is recommended the evaluation take place every three years to assess progress against the future action framework. The Mental Health Working Group should be convened four times annually, commencing in January 2020.

**Summary**

The Torrens Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework provides a structure from which current and future mental health and wellbeing initiatives can be planned and coordinated. The Framework provides directives for progress over the coming four years to refine existing initiatives and develop new ones. Collaboration from staff and students at each campus on the five action areas of the Framework will support the health and wellbeing, and academic success, of Torrens students.

**References**