



Abertay  
University

# **Student Mental Health Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

At Abertay we believe that students who are experiencing mental health difficulties have the right to be treated with respect as intelligent, capable and equal human beings. The University encourages students to admit to feeling anxious, stressed or depressed without thinking that there is a stigma attached to it. Students need to be able to seek assistance, assured that they will not damage their reputation or future academic prospects.

By taking mental health seriously and showing a caring attitude towards our students, the work of the University is likely to be enriched and its own health improved. As a result the University will endeavour to ensure that at a minimum staff are provided with opportunities in increase their awareness of Mental Health so they are able to deal positively with mental health issues.

The majority of students with mental health difficulties (see appendix A for definition) are able to navigate their University careers successfully through a combination of self-care, reasonable adjustments within their programme of study, specialist support services and the support offered by external services. A minority of students experience difficulty in acknowledging the impact of their mental health upon their safety, wellbeing, their academic progression and their capacity to engage in the wider student experience.

## **2. Policy Statement**

The University aims to provide a challenging and stimulating environment with opportunities for academic, social, cultural and sporting engagement. In this way, the University aims to make a positive contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of all students.

The University seeks to create a campus environment that promotes healthy, responsible living; promotes mutual respect; supports the well-being of each of its members and is in accordance with both current legislation and University regulations. The University recognises that mental health difficulties may impair the ability of an individual to develop their academic and/or social relationships. Therefore the University seeks to ameliorate difficulties by providing a range of support mechanisms and information for staff and students in the area of mental well-being.

The University wants to promote a culture in which mental health difficulties are recognised and supported; and to minimise any disadvantage, academically or otherwise, because of their difficulties in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy. Additionally, the University has specific responsibilities towards those students whose mental health is defined as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place to support their learning.

A positive approach from students and University staff towards the management of mental health conditions is critical to student learning, academic achievement and the quality of the wider student experience for all. To this end, the University aims to provide a supportive environment in which all students, including those with mental health difficulties, have the opportunity to realise their full potential and meet the academic requirements of their programme of study.

### 3. Aims

Mental health difficulties can beset students at any point in their academic career, and some students may begin their studies with pre-existing conditions. The teaching and learning experience at Abertay is one in which some students will thrive but for others it may present a challenge to wellbeing. It is well-recognised that transitions in life can be times of acute stress. However, participation in University life can also present an opportunity to develop resilience, independence and skills to manage personal wellbeing and contribute to the wellbeing of others. To this end Abertay encourages students to contribute to their own self-care and to contribute to the quality and wellbeing of the University community.

When mental health difficulties are adversely affecting a student's capacity to engage productively with their studies or with the University community, students are invited to engage with the support available. The University will assist students to understand the support provision within the University, within its remit as an institution of Higher Education, and to assist students to access appropriate external support where necessary.

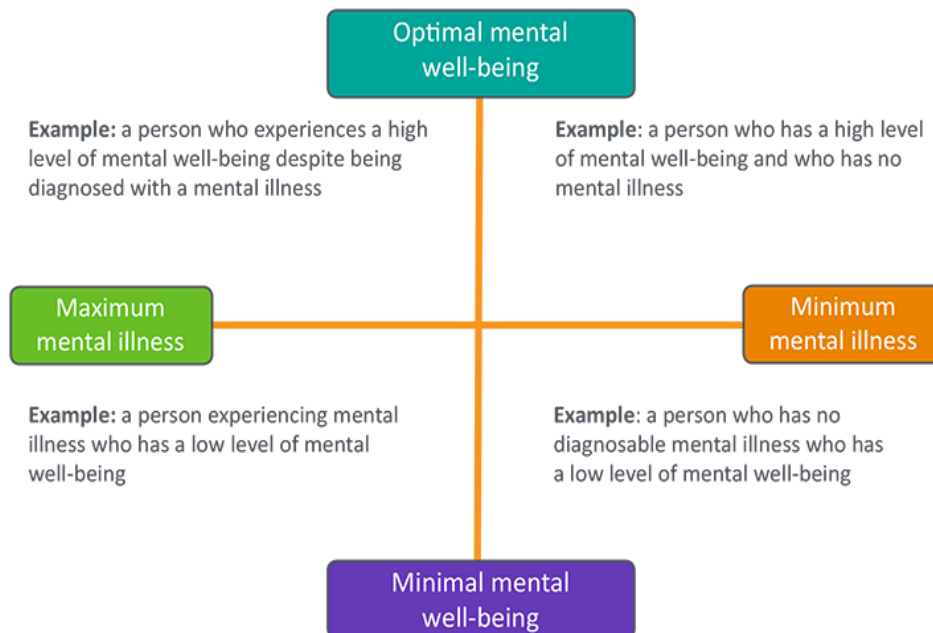
The University seeks to implement its aims by:

- Providing and promoting support, advice and guidance and access to specialists in the Counselling and Mental Health Service and Advisory Service
- Providing and promoting a range of activities to encourage a proactive approach for students to support their mental wellbeing, including workshops and access to physical and fitness activities
- Encouraging students with mental health difficulties to make these known to the University and to seek support both pre-arrival and after they have commenced their studies, and at such times that their support needs may change, for example in undertaking work or study placements abroad;
- Taking a proactive and collaborative stance in supporting students to develop a support plan;
- Ensuring that transparent and consistent procedures are adopted across the University;
- Providing clear guidance on the confidentiality of personal information provided by students;
- Providing guidance, training and support to staff involved in student support;
- Raising awareness among academic staff of the support available for students, the referral processes and how to raise concerns;
- Providing a clear process to address concerns relating to mental health crisis or fitness to study;
- Maintaining strong links with local specialist mental health services to improve the provision of services to meet students' needs and referring students with mental health difficulties to services when appropriate;
- Providing a physical environment that incorporates design features to address mental wellbeing as well as physical disabilities; and
- Providing students with information on external support, including online, telephone and 'apps'.

Whilst the University is committed to providing a supportive environment, it is important to recognise that it is not a primary care provider for mental health nor is it a therapeutic community. There are limits to the extent of the support that can be provided and it is not the responsibility of the University to replicate services that already exist within the wider community and within the NHS.

## Appendix A: Definition of Mental Health

This Policy uses the broad term **mental health difficulties** to describe the issues that fall within its scope. A useful framework to describe the continuum of mental health is presented in the figure below:



**Mental wellbeing** is a dynamic state that describes our current capacity to enjoy life and to work productively and creatively, our ability to build and sustain positive relationships with ourselves and with others.

**Mental illness** can be acute<sup>1</sup> or chronic<sup>2</sup>, and may arise from organic, genetic, psychological, relational or behavioural factors (or any combination of these). The illness may fall within the definition of a 'disability' as set out in the Equality Act 2010, but not all mental health illnesses constitute a 'disability'. A mental illness may be, but is not limited to, a condition diagnosed by a medical professional. An individual with a long-term mental illness may experience good mental wellbeing if they are adequately resourced and supported in managing their condition.

<sup>1</sup> Acute mental illness is characterised by significant and distressing symptoms of a mental illness requiring immediate an intervention. This may be the person's first experience of mental illness, a repeat episode or the worsening of symptoms of an often continuing mental illness.

<sup>2</sup> Chronic refers to mental health conditions which current medical interventions can only control not cure, for example, bi-polar disorder. Definitions and pathologies for mental illness can be found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder as known as DSM 4 or DSM 5.

## **Appendix B: Fitness to Study**

In exceptional circumstances, where there are concerns about a student's welfare and where the range of supportive measures that the University may be reasonably expected to provide have been employed, but have not satisfactorily resolved concerns, the appropriate policy and procedure is the fitness to study protocol [<https://intranet.abertay.ac.uk/download.php?f=Fitness-to-Study-Protocol-for-Students.pdf>]. The policy applies for all conditions where there are concerns about a student's capacity to engage in academic engagements, maintain their own safety or to reside in the University community without adversely impacting their peers or University staff.

## Appendix C: Mental Health Emergency/Crisis

A student mental health crisis may arise for a variety of reasons, but may be defined as:

*A state of significant distress in which the student is struggling or unable to cope; is exhibiting seriously disturbing behaviour; and requires timely support provided by others in order to ensure their own welfare and safety or the safety of other people*

Crisis intervention requires immediate attention so that the student is referred on to the NHS and other emergency services. Crisis interventions happen rarely in practice, but responding to them can be challenging and anxiety provoking. They require decisive action, and may stretch many of us beyond the usual day-to-day activities associated with our individual roles. When responding to a crisis situation, it is important to:

- Bear confidentiality in mind.
- Reassure the student that any information they give will be treated with respect.
- Information about the student should only be shared with those who are directly involved in responding to the situation.

It is good practice to consult with the student whenever possible about information sharing, and to reach an agreement about an appropriate course of action. However, there may be some urgent situations where there is not time to gain explicit consent, or where a student may disagree with the proposed course of action. If there is an immediate risk to life, and/or injury to the student or to others, it is appropriate to take action in the absence of consent, and to address any outstanding issues once the immediate situation has been dealt with.

A situation is deemed urgent if you believe the student is at serious risk of immediate harm to self or others. This can be as a result of one or more of the following reasons:

- The student is at risk of serious self-harm (or has already self-harmed to the extent of requiring medical treatment)
- The student expresses suicidal thoughts or feelings, and you are concerned that they may act upon these
- The student seems very disorientated and/or out of touch with reality
- The student is threatening violence to people or property

Every situation is different and it is impossible to develop a process that will cover every detail or every possible situation. In thinking through what you might consider, here are some additional points:

1. If you have been trained in ASIST or Mental Health First Aid, have you covered the basics?
2. Who else has been involved? Flatmates; other students; university staff; healthcare professionals; neighbours, members of the public, etc; [record details]
3. What impact did the incident have on those involved? Who saw what?

4. Who did what, where and when?
5. Containing the situation: What needs to happen now? What needs to happen when the University reopens during normal working hours?
6. Who is the students ' GP?
7. [Use flow chart – should you call NHS24 \(111\) for advice and guidance or 999?](#)
8. At some point, once the situation has stabilised, record the details of the event for an incident report

### **Additional Resources of Support**

- **NHS24** – Tel: 111 or [www.Nhs24.com](http://www.Nhs24.com)
- **The Dundee Out-of-Hours GP Service** is open from 6pm until 8am each weekday and 24 hours at weekends and public holidays. This service is for patients who become ill during the out-of-hours period and who cannot wait until their GP surgery opens. The service is by appointment only and can be accessed by calling NHS 24 on 111. It is based at Kings Cross Health and Community Care Centre within the grounds of Kings Cross Hospital in Dundee.
- **Breathingspace Scotland** - Tel: 0800 838587 or [www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)
- **Samaritans** – Tel:08457 909090 or [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- **Mind** – Tel: 0300 123 3393 (Mon – Fri, 0900 – 1800 not Bank Holidays) or <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- **Student Mental Health Advisor** – David Cameron;  
Tel: 01382 308816 Email: [d.cameron@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:d.cameron@abertay.ac.uk)
- **Student Counselling Service** – Tel: 01382 308051 Email: [counselling@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@abertay.ac.uk) (Monday to Friday 0900 – 1600)
- **Social Work (Out of hours team)** – Tel: 01382 307964 [Operating Hours: Weekdays, 4.30 pm to 9.30 am; Weekends, 4.30 pm (Friday) to 9.30 am (Monday); All public holidays are covered on a 24 hour basis.]
- **Women's Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre** – Tel: 0300 365 2001 or <https://www.wrasac.org.uk>

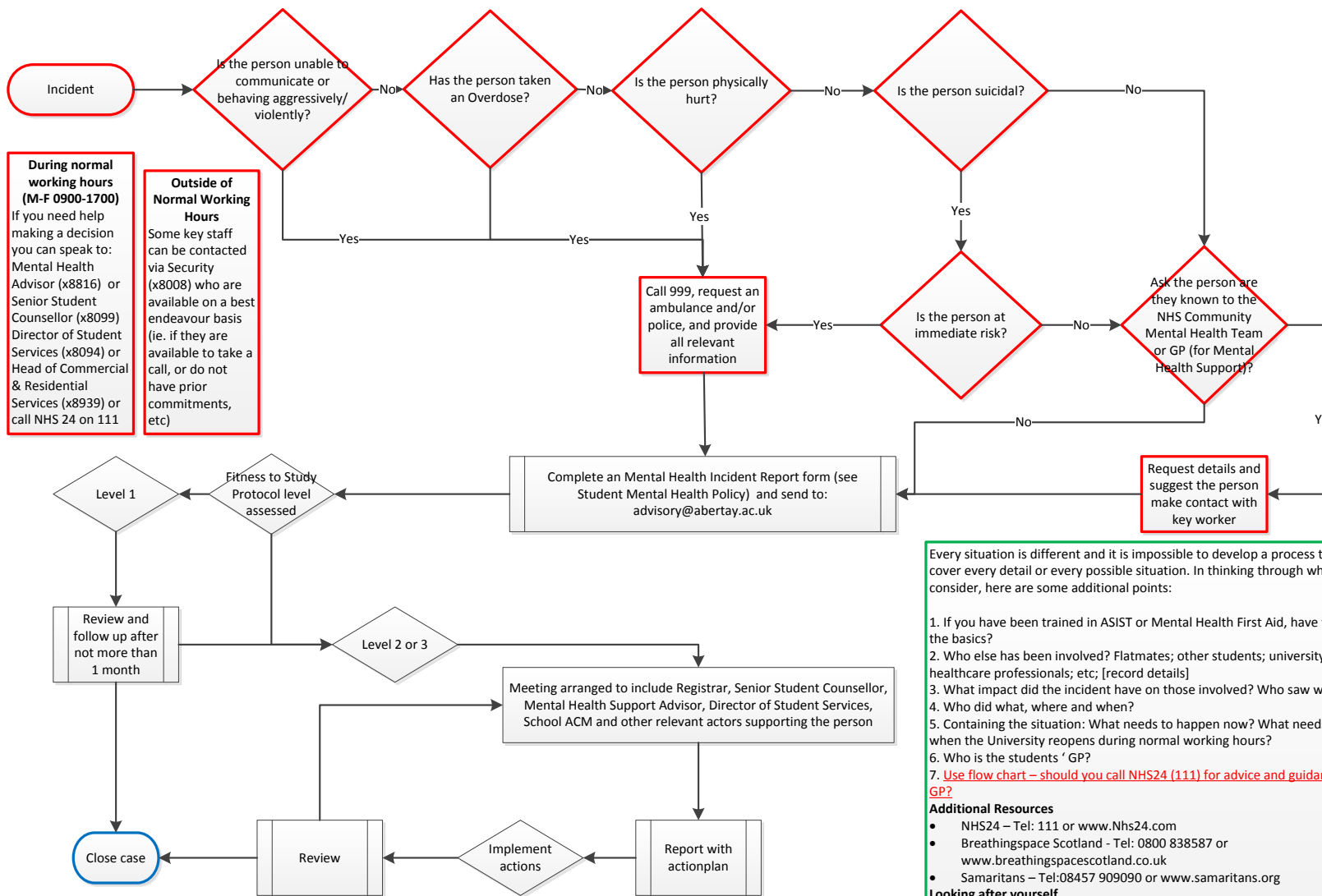
### **Looking after yourself**

It may be helpful to talk through (debrief) with your line manager if you have been involved in a crisis intervention incident. Talking through events can sometimes be a useful way of processing and making sense of what has been experienced.

The University also has staff counselling available (Rowan Counselling Services) if the situation you have dealt with raises concerns or issues you may wish to discuss or address confidentially – Tel: 01738 562005. Further information can be found at: <http://www.rowan-consultancy.co.uk/Documents/StaffCounselling.pdf>

Additionally, you can contact the University Occupational Health Advisor – Tel: 01382 308091. Further information can be found at: <https://intranet.abertay.ac.uk/staff/working-at-abertay/health-wellbeing/>





**During normal working hours (M-F 0900-1700)**  
 If you need help making a decision you can speak to: Mental Health Advisor (x8816) or Senior Student Counsellor (x8099) Director of Student Services (x8094) or Head of Commercial & Residential Services (x8939) or call NHS 24 on 111

**Outside of Normal Working Hours**  
 Some key staff can be contacted via Security (x8008) who are available on a best endeavour basis (ie. if they are available to take a call, or do not have prior commitments, etc)

Every situation is different and it is impossible to develop a process that will cover every detail or every possible situation. In thinking through what you might consider, here are some additional points:

1. If you have been trained in ASIST or Mental Health First Aid, have you covered the basics?
2. Who else has been involved? Flatmates; other students; university staff; healthcare professionals; etc; [record details]
3. What impact did the incident have on those involved? Who saw what?
4. Who did what, where and when?
5. Containing the situation: What needs to happen now? What needs to happen when the University reopens during normal working hours?
6. Who is the students ' GP?
7. Use flow chart – should you call NHS24 (111) for advice and guidance or 999 or GP?

**Additional Resources**

- NHS24 – Tel: 111 or [www.Nhs24.com](http://www.Nhs24.com)
- Breathingspace Scotland - Tel: 0800 838587 or [www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)
- Samaritans – Tel:08457 909090 or [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Looking after yourself**  
 It may be helpful to talk through (debrief) with your line manager. The University also has staff counselling available (Rowan Counselling Services) if the situation you have dealt with raises concerns or issues you may wish to discuss confidentially – Tel: 01738 562005

## Appendix D: Mental Health Incident Report Form

Student ID	
Name of Student	
Programme of Study	
Name of Person Reporting Incident (inc. extension number)	
Date of report	
Describe the nature of the concern and/or event causing a concern	
Where and when did the event occur? Date of event (if different from report date)?	
What action has been taken? (if no action taken, please state this)	
Who else has been involved? [names & details] Flatmates; other students; university staff; healthcare professionals; emergency services, etc; [Who did what, when and where]	
What impact did the incident have on those involved?	
Do you think the student is at risk? (Check box, where appropriate)	
Suicide <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Harm <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol misuse <input type="checkbox"/> Drug misuse <input type="checkbox"/>	Physical abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Harming others <input type="checkbox"/>
If Harming Others: Who might they harm/What harm might they cause?	
If Suicide: Does the student have a plan? What is the plan?	
Students GP & address [if known]	

[Download a version of the the above form that can be completion in electronic format.](#)

Once completed it should be saved and sent to: [advisory@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:advisory@abertay.ac.uk)

**Note:** This form will only be actioned during working hours, Monday to Friday 0900-1700

## Rapid Impact Checklist

**Document title:** Student Mental Health Policy

**Author & School/Service:** James Nicholson, Director of Student Services

**Reason for the Equality Impact Assessment:**

Proposed new document	
Proposed change to existing document	x
Review of existing document	x
Other (please state):	

**Could any protected characteristics be affected by this proposal?<sup>3</sup>**

Yes	No
x	

**If yes, which protected characteristic groups could be affected?**

Age		Disability	x
Gender reassignment		Pregnancy and maternity	
Race/ethnicity		Religion or belief (including lack of belief)	
Sex		Sexual orientation	

**Will the proposal have any impact on:**

	Yes	No
Discrimination?	X	
Equality of opportunity?	X	
Relations between groups?	X	

**Will the proposal have an impact on the physical environment? For example, will there be impacts on:**

Living conditions?	
Working conditions?	
Pollution or climate change?	
Accidental injuries or public safety?	

**If the answer to any of the above is 'yes', please proceed to complete the Comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment.**

<sup>3</sup> 'Proposal' is used as shorthand for any policy, procedure, strategy or proposal that might be assessed.

## Appendix E: Comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA)

### Details of document

Document title	Student Mental health Policy
Document owner	James Nicholson
School/Service	Student Services

### Aim of the document

What are the aims and objectives of the document?
To provide policy guidance relating to students with mental health difficulties or illness

How important is the document in terms of equality in the University? Does it relate to an area with known inequalities or where equality objectives have been set by the University?
The document provides a policy statement in relation to student with mental health difficulties or illness, information in relation to support and how the University will address students suffering a mental health crisis/emergency or mental illness when related to their fitness to study.

Who is affected by the document and how have they been involved in the development of it?
Students with mental health difficulties or illness. Staff supporting student with mental health difficulties or illness. Students and staff were consulted as part of a working group to review the student mental health policy.

Are any persons affected by the document likely to benefit from it and in what way?
Students and staff will have better information in relation to the support available and the University's approach to student mental health. Staff are provided with a formal way of raising and addressing concerns relating to individual students and their mental ill health.

Is there any evidence or concern that any of the protected characteristic groups have different experiences, issues or needs in relation to this document? (Please provide details in the box below)			
Age		Race	
Disability	x	Religion or Belief	
Gender Reassignment		Sex	
Pregnancy & Maternity		Sexual Orientation	
Marriage & Civil Partnership			
Further details:			

How does the document fit into the broader strategic aims of the University?

Student retention ; better 'customer service' for students; clearer guidelines and responsibilities for staff supporting students; addresses issues of supporting student community with a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences.

### Consideration of available data

*(Consider what data is available. Data can include surveys, focus groups, analysis of complaints made, feedback received, consultations, etc.)*

What do we know from existing data already held by the University?

There has been an increase in the numbers of student declaring a mental health condition over the past 5 years (up by 50%). Additionally, the number of student accessing the counselling and mental health service has increased by 72% since 2012/13.

What do we know from existing data which is available externally?

Information and data from a variety of sources indicates that student with mental health concerns are more likely to have issues relating to the engagement of their studies (related to their mental health) which can have an effect on completion and attainment.

Are there any apparent gaps in knowledge?

No

### Impact of document

Could this document lead to any positive, negative, intended or unintended impact on the University or any of its stakeholders?

There is potential for positive impact in relation to the removal of the stigma of mental ill health and in addressing and supporting students in distress or crisis in a compassionate and caring manner. The ability to address risk relating to mental ill health.

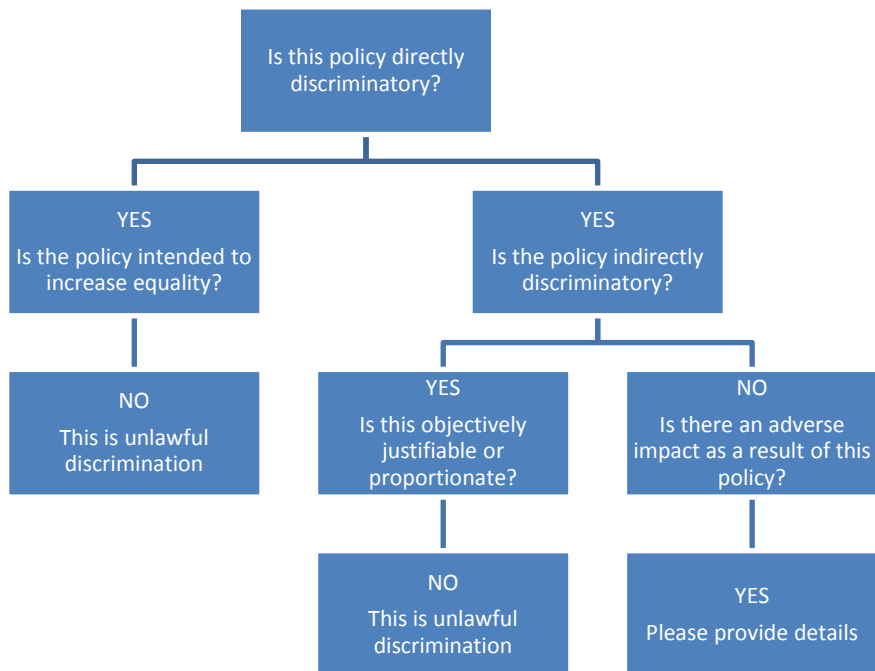
Could there be a differential<sup>4</sup> impact on any protected characteristics? Could any differential impact be adverse?

No

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<sup>4</sup> Differential impact = where the positive or negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

Please consider the following:



**CONSIDER:** Is this document unlawfully discriminatory? If you find that it is, you must decide how the University will act lawfully.

### Consultation

What did this equality analysis conclude?
The policy, as currently written, is fit for purpose and provides a clearer explanation of the processes and procedures in supporting student with mental ill health needs.

Is any action required to be taken in response to the findings from the consultation?
None.

What is the recommendation for this document following consultation?			
Reject the document		Approve and publish the document	X
Amendment required		Other (please provide details below)	

**Declaration**

I confirm that this equality analysis represents a fair and reasonable view of the implications of the document for all protected characteristic groups, and that appropriate actions have been identified to address the findings.

	<b>CEIA owner</b>
	<b>Line manager</b> (if appropriate)

**Committee approval**

Which Committee has this document gone before for approval?
Date of Committee meeting:

Following Committee consultation, what is the decision for this document?			
Reject the document		Approve and publish the document	
Amend the document		Other (please give details below)	

If the Committee requires that the document be amended, please list amendments below.