STUDENT WELLBEING MATTERS

Enhancing student wellbeing: University Framework and resources for academic educators

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ENHANCING STUDENT WELLBEING

A Framework for Promoting Student Mental Wellbeing in Universities

There is a strong and expanding evidence base indicating that University students are a 'very high risk population' for psychological distress and mental disorders, and that the prevalence and severity of mental health difficulties is growing across student populations[1]. The research raises a pressing question for administrators and educators: Given that a substantial proportion of students will experience mental health difficulties during their time at university, how can universities ensure they provide supportive and 'health-promoting' environments?

This *Framework for Promoting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing* aims to assist institutions to develop a 'whole-of-university' approach. It identifies key **action areas** for promoting student mental health and wellbeing as well as institutional **enablers** for achieving those actions. For each action, the framework identifies priority activities and possible measures of progress that can be adapted for different university environments, acknowledging that individual institutional approaches will vary according to local contexts and priorities.

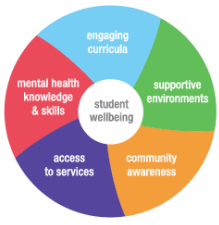
Health promoting actions

1 Foster engaging curricula and learning experiences
2 Cultivate supportive social, physical and digital environments
3 Strengthen community awareness and actions
4 Develop students' mental health knowledge and self-regulatory skills
5 Ensure access to effective services

The five actions individually and together are important in developing a whole-of-institution approach to promoting student mental health and wellbeing. These actions will need to be supported by institutional arrangements that enable:

1 Policy development and review processes
2 Participation and empowerment of staff and students
3 Allocation of appropriate resources and recognition
4 Staff professional development

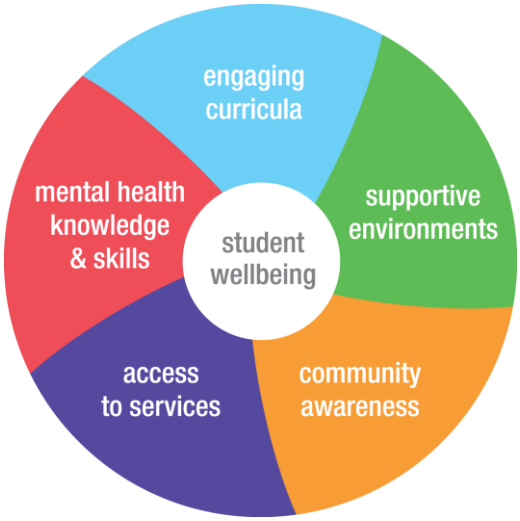
Figure 1 A Framework for Promoting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

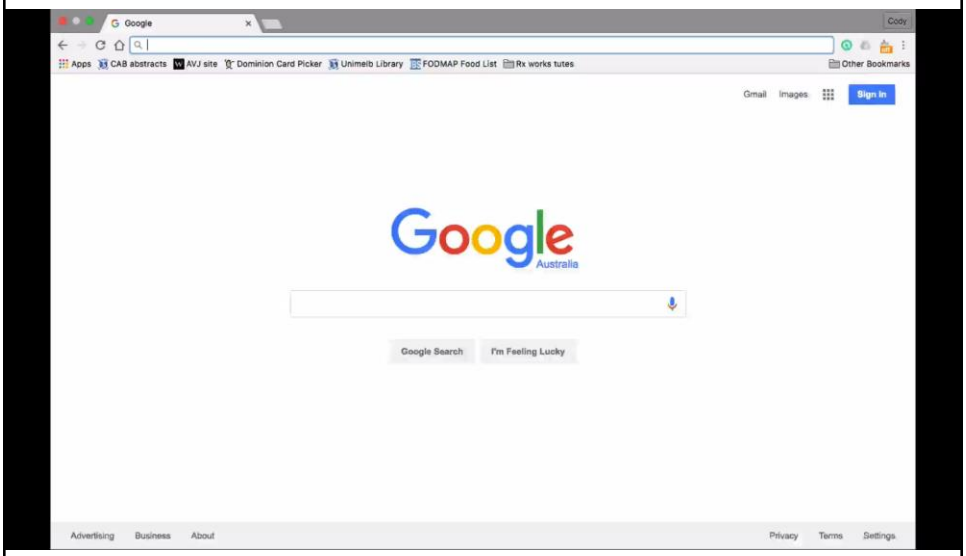


Approach

Our Framework draws on three well-known blueprints for health promotion: *The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*[2], *Healthy Universities*[3] *in the UK*[4] and *Mindmatters*[5]. It was developed through a process of feedback and consultation with higher education researchers, mental health experts, institutional leaders and academic and professional staff from 13 universities.

A framework for promoting student mental health and wellbeing

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