

# **Glasgow Caledonian University & GCU Students' Association**

## **Student Mental Health Agreement 2019-2020**

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## Introduction and Background

As part of the NUS Think Positive Student Mental Health Agreement project, GCU Students' Association and Glasgow Caledonian University have committed together since 2017-18 to creating and implementing an annual comprehensive and coordinated Student Mental Health Agreement (the Agreement).

As part of drawing up the Agreement each year, both parties, led by the Students' Association full time officer with responsibility for Mental health and wellbeing, have mapped current provision of services, looked at trends and issues affecting students at GCU and in the wider student movement and consulted with student and university representatives. The impact of the previous year's Agreement is evaluated in order to ensure that there is a proactive momentum each year with the overall aim of ensuring that good mental health and wellbeing is achievable for all students at GCU, and that a "whole institution approach" is taken to achieve this and enhance a culture of support, openness and inclusivity around mental health across campus.

In formulating this 2019-20 Agreement the current year's Full time officer lead in consultation with stakeholders has chosen a focus on 3 main themes: Rethink Mental Health; Be well to do Well; and Need Help? Here's how to get it.

Within these 3 overarching themes the Agreement sets out 7 working areas in which specific and measurable actions are grouped. These working areas are Campaigns, Strategic Approach; Events; Workshops; Supporting Specific Student Groups; Promotion of Services and Staff Support.

## Theme 1: Re-Think Mental Health

GCU Students' Association and Glasgow Caledonian University believe it's important to promote a culture and community of acceptance and inclusivity for Mental Health.

This is why we are developing various actions to challenge mental health stigma, and increase the visibility of mental health at GCU, alongside looking at unique ways to enhance wellbeing across our community.

By doing this we aim to encourage everyone at GCU to "Re-think Mental Health" as something that we all have, that we should all prioritise and that we can all play a role in improving as part of a "whole institution" approach that includes all staff and students.

### Working Areas 1 – Campaigns

We will focus on regular campaigns and activities to nurture and continually reinforce a positive message and culture of acceptance and inclusivity around mental health. We will aim to uncover any remaining stigma surrounding mental health on campus and to counter this in a positive way with accurate information and reassurance.

- **Mental Health Stop the Stigma campaign – Let's Talk** – The Students' Association will produce and promote a video on campus and on social media featuring students from all student groups with focus on reducing stigma, promoting positive mental health and reducing barriers to seeking support.

**[Success Measures: number of views of video on social media; feedback from students/participants]**

- **Establishing a Mental Health Pledge Campaign** – We aim to establish a visible partnership pledge between Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association in which students and staff will be encouraged to sign. The pledge message will be "I pledge to embrace an inclusive and supportive community of positive health and wellbeing for all at Glasgow Caledonian University."

**[Success Measures: University and Students' Association Staff develop a Pledge Campaign in partnership; Campaign is launched on World Mental Health Day; Staff and Students sign the pledge; The Pledge is visible throughout the year]**

- **Exam Stress Campaigns** – The Students' Association will provide a stall providing information, resources and free fruit, herbal teabags and biscuits during each exam diet outside the 24-hour lab in SA building. In addition to this a Digital detox/de-stress zone will be created in the adjacent 24-hour area during each trimester exam period.

**[Success measures: Stall and digital detox zone provided during exam periods in both trimesters; uptake of resources and freebies from stall; feedback from social media; statistics for advice centre]**

- **Mental Health Awareness Week Campaign – May 18th-24th** – Hosted by the Mental Health Foundation, MHAW will focus this year on Kindness. GCU Wellbeing team and the Students' Association will work together to plan and promote events and activities that aim to challenge misconceptions, start conversations and change attitudes around mental health.

**[success measures: plan activities and events aligning to theme of the week; promote events; events take place, participant numbers and feedback]**

- **Mental Health Campaign: GCU Community: (For across the GCU campus, launching 2020-21)**

We recognise the growing need to continue to support our students and staff, and to take a holistic community approach to this work. We are committed to taking a proactive approach to support all our students and staff to achieve their optimal

mental health, wellbeing and resilience, in order to thrive in and outside the University, realise their full potential and transform the health and wellbeing of our wider communities for the common good. Various initiatives have taken place across the institution to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community at GCU, and we are working on a campaign to not only help communicate these support structures, but breaking down the barriers to accessing these services e.g. stigma.

**[Success Measures: Students and Staff Co-Produce Designs and Messages for Campaign, Campaign is consulted on with wider GCU Community, Experts and Key Stakeholders, Campaign is funded and approved for distribution across the campus.]**

## **Working Area 2 - Strategic approach**

The need to implement a strategic approach is outlined by many across the sector, including [UUK in their Step Change Framework for Student Mental Health](#), [Student Minds](#), and indeed Think Positive about Student Mental Health in this project for [Student Mental Health Agreements](#).

This is why throughout this academic year, we have aimed to enhance not only ongoing strategic projects and strategies, but introduce new innovative projects for student and staff mental health.

- **QAA Cluster Project for Inclusive Curriculum Designs** - GCU aim to work with colleagues across the higher education sector, including SPARQs and our Students' Association to form a collaborative cluster with the Quality Assurance Agency. The

cluster aims to explore curricula design in regards to mental health and wellbeing, and produce a series of recommendations for academic staff.

**[Success Measures: Application is submitted and successfully approved to form a Cluster with the QAA; Call to other institutions for involvement is circulated; Team is established; Cluster undertakes and publishes work]**

- **Project Officer for Student Mental Health** - To enhance and further embed the whole institutional approach GCU undertakes in regards to enhancing our staff and student wellbeing, we aim to appoint a Project Officer for Student Mental Health. The project officer's main responsibility will be to facilitate a whole institutional approach to enhancing wellbeing at GCU. **[Success Measures: Role is advertised; position is filled]**
- **Appoint two additional Counsellors in Tri A** - Following the recent announcement from the Scottish government of additional funding for counsellors across colleges and universities in Scotland, the GCU wellbeing team aim to appoint two additional part-time counsellors in Trimester A.

**[Success Measures: Roles are advertised; positions are filled]**

- **Enhance the Student Mental Health Action Plan**- In 2017, GCU introduced the development of a Student Mental Health Action Plan. We aim to continue to enhance this action plan and further develop the ongoing work to support staff and student mental health. The action plan is overseen by our Student Wellbeing Advisory Group – see below.

**[Success measures: Additional actions are added into the SMHAP; actions are implemented, and evaluated; impact of the Action Plan is evaluated]**

- **Continue meetings of the Student Wellbeing Advisory Group** - The Student Wellbeing Advisory Group is a cross institutional working group and was formed in 2019 (formally the Student Mental Health Task Group) to continue working to support student mental health and wellbeing. The group features representation from across the GCU Community, including academics, GCU London, GCU Students' Association and GCU London Students' Association, INTO GCU, and a key external from the mental wellbeing sector.

**[Success Measures: group continues to run with representation from key individuals across the University and Local Community]**

- **Review and further enhance our Mitigating Circumstances Procedures** - Building upon prior reviews and enhancements to our Mitigating Circumstances process, we aim to continue this review throughout the 19/20 Academic year to explore the implementation of online submissions, alongside other amendments to the process.

**[Success Measures: Process is reviewed; recommendations are considered across the University Committee Structure; new recommendations are approved and embedded]**

## **Theme 2: Be Well to Do Well**

We aim to prioritise mental health and wellbeing on campus and to highlight that this is an essential foundation to academic success, not just a nice touchy-feely add on.

We want to look at further enhancing a culture across campus that prioritises mental health and wellbeing, and how the Students' Association in partnership with the university can support students and help them to become proactive in supporting their own wellbeing and to learn new coping skills and mechanisms. To do well, you need to be well.

### **Working Area 3 - Events**

The university and the Students' Association will together and separately plan and run a number of events to ensure that a practice of continually monitoring and investing in your individual mental health and wellbeing is supported as an integral part of being at GCU. To ensure accessibility for all the events will include a variety of delivery (online and offline), and of length and times (evening, lunchtime, bookable free sessions and day long drop ins etc.).

- **Mindful Mondays**— Students' Association Full time officer led social media campaign sharing mental health and wellbeing tips and resources every week (on Mondays!).

**[success measures: posts made each week; number of views, shares; evidence of engagement and student feedback]**

- **Feel Fab Feb** – A month of mental health and wellbeing themed events and activities organised and curated by the Students' Association to chase away those post-exam new year blues.

**[success measures: full schedule of activities organised; participation number; student feedback]**

- **World Mental Health Day event – October 10th** - This year to celebrate World Mental Health Day Glasgow Caledonian University and GCU Students' Association will hold a range of drop in activities, workshops and lectures for students and staff.

**[Success Measures: Event is planned in partnership between students and staff; Range of activities to enhance the holistic nature of mental health wellbeing; Information and self-care resources available on day; Pre-existing internal and external support services advertised on day; Event is evaluated; Improve students' and staff's awareness of support and promote a sense of belonging.]**

- **University Mental Health Day events – March 7th** - We hope to improve students' and staff's awareness of support and promote a sense of belonging and breaking down barriers by running workshops, events and launching a Let's Talk video throughout the 7th of March.

**[Success Measures: Event is planned in partnership between students and staff; Range of activities to enhance the holistic nature of mental health wellbeing are provided and Let's Talk Video launched from students and Students' Association staff; Information and self-care resources available on day; Pre-existing internal and external support services advertised on day; Event is evaluated; positive student and staff engagement and feedback]**

**National Fitness Day – 25th September** - We recognise the link between physical activity and mental wellbeing, and the positive effects exercise can have on wellbeing and mental health. As such, GCU aim to provide free access to the on campus gym – The Arc: Health and Fitness, on National Fitness Day.

**[Success Measures: Range of activities to enhance the holistic nature of mental health wellbeing; Information and self-care resources available on day; Pre-existing internal and external support services advertised on day]**

- **"Paws Against Stress" Event** – GCU Wellbeing will host another, extremely popular Paws Against Stress event with Canine Concern Scotland to bring bookable, free sessions with "Therapet" dogs and their owners for students, proven to relieve stress and increase wellbeing.

**[Success Measures: Event is planned in partnership with Canine Concern Scotland; Information and self-care resources available on day; Pre-existing internal and external support services advertised on day; positive student participation and feedback; Event is evaluated].**

## **Working Area 4 - Workshops**

Throughout the 2019/20 academic year we aim to increase the knowledge and understanding of students and staff on what support GCU and GCU Students' Association provide for mental wellbeing, and also improve mental health literacy, awareness of self-care resources, and challenge mental health stigma.

- **Continue to offer free mindfulness course for our Students and Staff** - GCU aim to continue offering free mindfulness sessions to GCU Students and staff, through our Mindfulness and People Service's teams, and to expand provision to offer sessions across both trimesters for our students following positive feedback in previous years.



**[Success Measures: Student mindfulness provision is continued; staff mindfulness provision is continued; provision is enhanced to be offered across both Trimester A and B.]**

- **Offering a Mental Health Matters Workshop at inductions** - The GCU Disability Team will deliver a one-day programme for applicants who experience mental health difficulties or long term mental illness, with the aim of providing a smoother transition from school/college to university, address anxieties around starting university and to explore the support available at GCU. The workshop will also look at self-care and how to look after your mental health whilst at university.

**[Success Measures: Mental Health Matters workshop is designed; Workshop is delivered at induction; Workshop is evaluated, enhanced and embedded for future years]**

- **Continue to develop our Summer Transitions workshops** -The Disability Team, in partnership with the National Autistic Society (Scotland), delivers a [Summer Transition Programme](#) for applicants with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum (or Asperger's syndrome). This year we aim to continue to develop and provide this workshop for incoming GCU Students.

**[Success Measures: Workshop feedback from previous years is incorporated; Workshop is offered again before Tri A 2019/20; workshop is evaluated.]**

- **Embed a module on Mental Health and Wellbeing** - The GCU Wellbeing Team aim to expand the delivery of their provision into the online GCU Learn platform where students are used to engaging with their academic materials. On the module there will be ready access to self-care information, wellbeing resources, and remote access to our trimester wellbeing workshops.

**[Success Measures: Material is co-developed with partners across the institution for the module; The module is established; Online workshops are embedded into the module; Student feedback is evaluated from the module, and recommendations established and acted upon.]**

- **Explore the possibility of a Mindfulness Module at GCU** - The GCU Wellbeing Team aim to expand the delivery of their 8 Week Mindfulness course into an online module to help increase student engagement with the course, and expand the number of students who can access and engage with the resource.

**[Success Measures: Material is co-developed with partners across the institution for the module; The module is established; Online workshops are embedded into the module; Student feedback is evaluated from the module, and recommendations established and acted upon.]**

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- **Continued provision of SMHFA training to students** – Scottish Mental Health First Aid training will continue to be available to students taking part in the Student Leaders Programme at the Students' Association.

**[success measures: course available to Student Leaders participants, participant numbers, participants completing programme; feedback]**

## **Working Area 5 - Supporting specific student groups**

When identifying how we support our students, we adopt an approach which considers everyone in our GCU Community, valuing the diversity of our members, and ensuring our provisions are accessible across the variety of specific and intersectional experiences that our students may encounter. GCU have recently established a [specific webpage](#) which outlines the work we undertake to support our students, this includes our links and partnership work with external organisations and our students' association. In this Agreement, we aim to undertake a range of actions to support all of our students with their wellbeing.

- **Campus Quiet Spaces promotion** – Creation of a new quiet room at GCU Students' Association as a safe calm space available for all students; creation of a video and downloadable map highlighting this and other currently available quiet spaces on campus and how to find them.

Moreover, we aim to enhance the quiet space provision across the GCU Glasgow Campus by working in partnership to identify additional quiet spaces, establish a map which outlines these areas, and communicate these to students.

**[success measures – New SA quiet room created; existing quiet spaces on campus identified; video and online map created; video and map communicated to students; views and feedback from students; additional spaces identified; additional spaces consulted on and established]**

- **Offering a Social Meet up Group** – The Student Wellbeing Service are planning to continue their social meet up group, which is an informal weekly meet-up group for students to take some time out to focus on their health and wellbeing, whilst meeting new people.

**[Success Measures: Programme of events for group is established; Students are actively involved in the creation of the groups schedule; Communications for group are established; Group runs throughout the trimester]**

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- **Establish a Time4You Group for Student Carers** – The Students' Association will set up a Time4You group as a peer support group for Student Carers on campus.

**[Success measures: VP SHLS works with Student Carers officer to establish a Time4You group for student carers. Group is established, and meets to support students who identify as carers.]**

- **Working in partnership to co-create a Mental Health Related Sports Club at GCU Students' Association** - The GCU Wellbeing Team and GCU Students' Association aim to co-create a Mental Health related Sports Club at GCU Students' Association to help enhance student participation in physical activity.

The GCU Student Wellbeing Team would be able to refer students to participate in the sports club, which would follow a similar process to the Active Minds Referral Scheme (expanded on further below).

**[Success Measures: Students are consulted and co-create the Sports Club; Sports Club is established at GCU Students' Association; Students manage the club as a peer-support group; Student Wellbeing refers students to the club]**

- **Continue the Active Minds Referral Scheme** - The GCU wellbeing team currently have a partnership referral programme with our on-campus gym – the Arc: Health and Wellbeing, where the team are able to refer students to participate in the Arc gym classes, and provide memberships at a discounted rate for the student. The aim of this scheme is to help enhance student wellbeing through promoting the link between physical activity and wellbeing.

**[Success measures: Scheme continues to be offered to students; Students are referred by Wellbeing Service; Student participation and feedback]**

- **Social Eyes Programme** - The Disability Team aim to continue to run [a Social eyes programme](#) for GCU students who have a diagnosis, or who would identify with a diagnosis, on the autism spectrum. 'Social eyes' is a programme developed by the National Autistic Society to facilitate social skills and social understanding for people on the autism spectrum.

**[Success Measures: Social Eyes programme is offered to GCU Students throughout the academic trimesters; Feedback from prior years is considered and recommendations embedded; This year's workshops continue to be evaluated and enhanced]**

## Theme 3 - Need Help? Here's How to Get it

In their 2018 report, "Being well, doing well", Alterline highlighted that whilst the majority of students responding to their survey were aware of support available to them on campus, anxiety concerning initial contact was a barrier for a significant number of students to

accessing them when their mental health was suffering. In light of this evidence, in addition to raising awareness of the existing mental health support at GCU, we want to put in place interventions that can help to identify, address and dismantle any barriers that students and staff may face when accessing mental health support.

## **Working Area 6 - Promotion of Student Services**

As well as implementing new activities and areas of work we recognise the importance of continually raising awareness of the existing mental health support available at GCU.

- **Promotion of GCU Students' Association Advice Centre, Nightline and GCU Wellbeing Team Services** – To ensure a high awareness of mental health, advice and wellbeing services amongst staff and students we undertake ongoing promotion of GCU Students' Association and GCU Wellbeing team services via social media, fortnightly all student emails (GCU and GCU Students' Association alternately); screen ads around campus, and Fresher's/Refresher's campaigns and Nightline Awareness week face to face campaigns.

Within the GCU Wellbeing team a new student Wellbeing newsletter will be established and published weekly; blogs are published on support available; and the wellbeing webpages will be redeveloped to ensure easier access to wellbeing resources. Departments across GCU continue to work collaboratively to promote the wellbeing provisions available for GCU staff and students.

**[Success measures: all regular communications completed for Advice Centre, Nightline and wellbeing services; numbers accessing services; Wellbeing newsletter established and published weekly; webpages redeveloped; blogs published throughout the year on support available; social media posts by GCU and GCU Students' Association on wellbeing info]**

- **Start work towards creating large scale Peer to Peer Support network (to launch 2020-21)** – scope out project and apply for lottery funding for a roll out over several years of "Mind your Mate" training in order to create a large scale Peer to Peer support network at GCU. Research (including that undertaken in 2018 by Alterline, mentioned above) shows that peer support is something that many students feel more comfortable using as a first step to getting help.

**[Success Measures: research and scope out potential shape of project; apply for lottery funding; achieve funding to roll out project from 2020-21]**

- **Mental Health First Responder scheme pilot** – We will apply for a Think Positive Small Grant to enable the pilot of a visible lanyards scheme for staff Mental Health First Responders to wear making them more visible and approachable as people who are trained and empathetic towards those in need of mental health support. Aim for rollout of scheme in 2020-21.

**[Success Measures; granted funding; identify staff to approach to take part as Mental Health First Responders (lanyard wearers); define role of lanyard wearers and identify training required; run pilot; evaluate pilot; plan for roll out in 2020-21]**

- **Work to establish a self-help resource list at the GCU Library** - The GCU Wellbeing Team aim to work with the Sir Alex Ferguson Library to create a GCU wellbeing resource list. The aim of the list is to collate together books and eBooks which are available online, alongside videos and other resources relating to student wellbeing.

**[Success Measures: Wellbeing resources in the GCU Library are identified; Additional wellbeing resources are purchased; List is established online; List is published; Staff and students access the wellbeing resources from the list]**

- **Continue to be involved in Student Services Fairs** - Each academic year to enhance staff and student awareness of support provided by GCU and GCU Students' Association, GCU host a student services fair. This year we aim to continue our involvement in the student services fair.

**[Success measures: Student Support resources available at the Student Services fair; Student engagement with resources; Student and staff awareness increases of available support]**

- **Develop and enhance support resources for the GCU Wellbeing Team** -To help increase awareness and engagement by staff and students of the available wellbeing resources from the GCU Wellbeing Team, this year we are aiming to produce and enhance a suite of wellbeing resources:

*Information for parents and carers of new students*

*Carers information leaflet*

*New leaflet promoting the Wellbeing Service*

Additionally, we are aiming to also redesign our Identifying and Supporting Students in Distress Guide. Further information on this can be found in the Supporting Staff Section.

**[Success measures: New resources are developed/enhanced for GCU Students and staff, Awareness of support is enhanced within the GCU Community, Access to support resources increases].**

- **Launch a Wellbeing Newsletter within the GCU Wellbeing Service** - To help increase awareness and engagement by staff and students of the available wellbeing resources from the GCU Wellbeing Team, self-care resources, and more, we are aiming to develop and launch a weekly wellbeing newsletter from the GCU Wellbeing Service.

**[Success Measures: Newsletter is created and launched to GCU Students, over 100 Students sign up to the newsletter, Newsletter is sent weekly to GCU Students].**

## **Working Area 7 - Staff support**

In order to truly achieve a positive and inclusive mental health culture on campus it is imperative that we also ensure provision to support the wellbeing of staff. We do this by promoting a positive environment to work and study, signposting staff to information and training available to them as well as guidance and practical tips on how staff and students can support themselves and others.

- **Launching staff mental health resources area on internal webpages** - To enhance the awareness of our GCU Staff community of the available support for their health and wellbeing, we are aiming to develop and launch an internal resource area on our intranet (Caledonian Connected). The webpages will highlight available resources, training, services, supporting students, support for managers, events and more.

**[Success Measures: Webpages are designed in partnership with staff; Webpages are launched; Staff awareness of support resources increases; The webpages receive more than 150 views]**

- **Identifying and Supporting Students in Distress Handbook** - The GCU Wellbeing Team will redevelop their resources to help staff identify and support students in distress. The aim is to combine existing resources into one handbook which is easily accessible to GCU Staff, and enhance awareness of how to support GCU Students. The information will also be contextualised to GCU Support Sources.

**[Success Measures: Flowchart and documents are combined into one handbook; Handbook is designed, printed, and made available to GCU Staff online and physically; Awareness of support available in the staff community is increased]**

- **Continue the Mental Health at Work Taskforce**- The Mental Health at Work Taskforce is a committee within GCU which has oversight of the Mental Health at Work Action Plan. The groups work is fed into other areas of work across the University, including the Student Wellbeing Advisory Group, and has representation from across the University Community.

**[Success Measures: Group continues to run with representation from key individuals across the University Community]**

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- **Continue to develop the Mental Health at Work Action Plan** - In 2019, GCU introduced the development of a Mental Health at Work Action Plan. We aim to continue to enhance this action plan and further develop the ongoing work to support staff and student mental health. The action plan is overseen by the Mental Health at Work Taskforce.

**[Success measures: Additional actions are added into the MHaWP; Actions are implemented, and evaluated; Impact of the Action Plan is evaluated]**

**Signed by...Susan Docherty... (GCU Students' Association) Date..29/05/2020**

**Signed by ...Avril Williams..... (GCU Wellbeing Team) Date .....29/05/2020**