

Mental Health Policy for Students

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Introduction

The College is passionate about offering inclusive learning environments where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and is able to participate, progress and thrive. We recognise that some people may face additional barriers to inclusion, and we work hard to minimise or reduce these disadvantages.

BMet has seen an increase in students with significant mental health concerns entering college over recent years. The College recognises the need for policies which address the promotion of mental well-being of all students as well as working with and supporting students with mental health conditions.

As part of our commitment to inclusion, the College has a duty to offer an appropriate programme of study, with appropriate support, for students with mental health conditions. This support will be designed to meet the individual requirements of the students within college, where possible, or to referral external agencies.

In addition, the College is committed to raising awareness of mental health concerns and challenging negative stereotypes throughout the College, both for staff and students. Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing including information and guidance about support available will be part of this. This will include the provision of staff development as appropriate such as awareness raising in tutorials, classroom delivery and through the enrichment programme.

This policy provides guidelines for working with student with mental health support needs and/or those who may be experiencing mental health concerns.

1. Scope

This policy applies to any student or prospective student who discloses a mental health condition, or where there are indications of these conditions being present.

2. Equality and Diversity

The policy applies to all students regardless of the mode of attendance or funding methodology. The college recognises and celebrates multiple aspects of people's identity including age, race, gender, disability and health, socio-economic background, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation and family and relationship status. We want everyone to feel valued and included in the college community and to achieve their full potential. We are committed to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality which includes taking positive action where appropriate.

3. Safeguarding

The College recognises its legal and moral duty to provide a safe environment for everyone, implementing procedures and training to ensure support and protection for their well-being. The College will take appropriate action where the safeguarding of any person is threatened. This policy is applied with safeguarding in mind and links to the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and supporting regulatory frameworks.

4. Mental Health policy

4.1. Definitions

Mental Health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices.

Mental health concerns exist across a spectrum of states of mind and behaviours from temporary responses to painful events to more debilitating conditions.

If someone has a mental health condition that has long-term and substantial negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, this is considered a disability under [The Equality Act \(2010\)](#). “Long term” is defined as an impairment that has lasted or is likely to last at least 12 months. “Substantial” is defined as “more than minor or trivial”. [The Equality Act \(2010\)](#) does not provide a list of impairments that are covered, but instead considers the effects of a specific impairment or condition on a person.

4.2. Common Mental Health Conditions

4.2.1. Anxiety: Anxiety refers to feeling fearful or panicked, breathless, tense, fidgety, sick, irritable, tearful or having difficulty sleeping. Anxiety can significantly affect a person’s ability to develop, learn and sustain and maintain friendships.

Specialists reference the following diagnostic categories:

- Generalised anxiety disorder: This is a long-term condition which causes people to feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues, rather than one specific event.
- Panic disorder: This is a condition in which people have recurring and regular panic attacks, often for no obvious reason.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): This is a mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts (unwanted, unpleasant thoughts, images or urges that repeatedly enter their mind, causing them anxiety) and compulsions (repetitive behaviour or mental acts that they feel they must carry out to try to prevent an obsession coming true).
- Specific phobias: This is the excessive fear of an object or a situation, to the extent that it causes an anxious response such as a panic attack.
- Separation anxiety disorder: This disorder involves worrying about being away from home, or about being far away from family, at a level that is much more severe than normal.
- Social phobia: This is an intense fear of social or performance situations.
- Agoraphobia: This refers to a fear of being in situations where escape might be difficult, or help would be unavailable if things go wrong.

4.2.2. Depression: Depression refers to feeling excessively low or sad. Depression can significantly affect a person’s ability to develop, learn or maintain and sustain friendships. Depression can often lead to other issues such as behavioural problems. Generally, a diagnosis of depression will refer to one of the following:

- Major depressive disorder (MDD): A person with MDD will show several

depressive symptoms to the extent that they impair work, social or personal functioning.

- Dysthymic disorder: This is less severe than MDD and characterised by a person experiencing a daily depressed mood for at least two years.

4.2.3. Hyperkinetic disorders: Hyperkinetic disorders refer to a person who is excessively easily distracted, impulsive or inattentive. If a person is diagnosed with a hyperkinetic disorder, it will be one of the following:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): This has three characteristic types of behaviour: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. While some people show the signs of all three characteristics, which is called 'combined type ADHD', other people diagnosed show signs of only inattention, hyperactivity or impulsiveness.
- Hyperkinetic disorder: This is a more restrictive diagnosis but is broadly similar to severe combined type ADHD, in that signs of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness must all be present. The core symptoms must also have been present from before the age of seven, and must be evident in two or more settings i.e., home and another.

4.2.4. Attachment disorders: Attachment disorders refer to the excessive distress experienced when a person is separated from a special person in their life, like a parent. People suffering from attachment disorders can struggle to make secure attachments with peers. Researchers generally agree that there are four main factors that influence attachment disorders, these are:

- Opportunity to establish a close relationship with a primary caregiver.
- The quality of caregiving
- The person's characteristics.
- Family context.

4.2.5. Eating disorders: Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses which affect an individual's relationship with food. Eating disorders often emerge when worries about weight begin to dominate a person's life.

4.2.6. Substance misuse: Substance misuse is the use of harmful substances, e.g. drugs and alcohol.

4.2.7. Deliberate self-harm: Deliberate self-harm is a person intentionally inflicting physical pain upon themselves.

4.2.8. Post-traumatic stress: Post-traumatic stress is recurring trauma due to experiencing or witnessing something deeply shocking or disturbing. If symptoms persist, a person can develop post-traumatic stress disorder.

This is not an exclusive list but does show the diversity and complexity of mental illness.

4.3. Support provisions within the College

The College aims to provide integrated, individually tailored support for students with

mental health concerns regardless of whether they meet the disability criterion under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

4.4. Reasonable adjustments

In line with The Equality Act (2010) the College must make “reasonable adjustments” to support students or prospective students with a disability. In making a “reasonable adjustment” for a student with mental health concerns it is important that the individual is open to disclosure of mental health concerns at any time from application or on programme. Assessment of the individual’s needs with the involvement of the student will ensure that any provision or adjustment made will be beneficial for the student and be possible for the College to deliver. The process for assessment and implementation of reasonable adjustments are detailed in section 4.8

4.5. Pre-entry: Admissions & Enrolment

The College encourages applications from any individual who is able to benefit from studying and who meets the entry requirements. When interviewing a student with disclosed mental health concerns, it is important to consider if they are ‘well enough’ to attend, for both the benefit of the College and for themselves

Information about a mental health concern may be made during application or enrolment and may be discussed at interview. At all times it will be made clear that any information imparted will only be used in the student’s interests and with their full knowledge. Whilst it is preferable to obtain the student’s permission to disclose, where there is a safeguarding concern, this must take priority (see paragraph 4.6).

When interviewing a student with disclosed mental health concerns for a course it is important to consider if they are ‘well enough’ to attend, for both the benefit of the College and for themselves. As part of this it is important to assess whether, (subject to any reasonable adjustments to accommodate a disability) the student can manage the College environment, the requirements of the course to ensure the course is right for them.

If there is no previous information and an interviewer has a concern during the interview, they will not make a course offer at the time but consult with the Inclusive Support team after the interview. A second interview can be offered. An admission decision will then be made, and a record kept of the facts and the outcome. This information will be kept confidential.

4.6. Responsibilities for Supporting Students with Mental Health Concerns

Input from staff will be vital in identification of any mental health concerns after admission to college, as they will be the point of contact for many students in relation to their support needs. The College will support staff through training and resources to identify mental health concerns and provide initial support.

Not all students with mental health concerns will disclose their condition at application or enrolment and their mental health condition may become apparent during the course of their studies. Some students may also develop or see a deterioration in mental health concerns during their time at College.

Any member of staff who is made aware that a student has a mental health condition may refer them for additional support from the Pastoral & Wellbeing team (Performance Coach, Counsellor) or the Inclusive Support team. An assessment of their learning support and other needs will then be undertaken and appropriate support put in place.

Students following an Apprenticeship programme who have disclosed mental health concerns will be supported by the Inclusive Support team, Counsellor, Performance Coach or Assessor to discuss their condition with their employer where deemed necessary.

Personal Tutors will support students who have disclosed mental health concerns to share information, as appropriate including where appropriate with work placements to ensure the student is well supported.

Mental Health First Aiders will support students in crisis and provide first line support to students referred through Safeguarding, where defined as requiring support by Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Whilst college staff have a key role in supporting students with mental health difficulties, the College recognises that external agencies such as the NHS services have a duty to carry out assessment and treatment of serious mental health difficulties or emergencies.

The needs of a student with mental health concerns may be complex and diverse and liaison between tutors and other supporting services is key and will enable the best approach to integrated support. However, if the student declines support or does not wish their mental health condition to be disclosed to their tutor, in line with the Data Protection Act, the information should not be shared. That is unless it is considered that the student is likely to harm themselves or another person as a result of maintaining confidentiality.

4.7. Assessment and Implementation

4.7.1 The Inclusive Support team will undertake an assessment of support needs and plan any reasonable adjustments to be made. This may include:

- In class support/Inclusive Support Assistant
- Additional tutorial support
- Examination concessions
- Guidelines on time management and classroom behaviour
- Additional educational resources

4.7.2 Once the learning support needs of the student have been assessed the College will put in place other necessary measures, which could include:

- Access to counselling/mentoring
- Financial support
- Co-ordination with external agencies

4.7.3 While the assessment is undertaken by the Inclusive Support Team, the individually tailored support plan is implemented by a wide range of staff.

This may include:

- Personal/Course Tutors
- Student Experience teams
- Pastoral & Wellbeing teams
 - Performance Coaches
 - Counsellors

4.8. External Liaison

Liaison with local statutory and voluntary organisations is essential in both providing individually tailored support for specific individuals and to the College's role in the community at large. This information is available on SharePoint.

The Pastoral & Wellbeing team will ensure up to date information is available on SharePoint, Learner Landing Page and the college website to signpost students to external agencies when the college is closed.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. The College will provide:

- Training for staff
- Information, guidance, tutorial and enrichment activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Resources to enable support for mental health concerns or appropriate external referrals.

5.2. College staff are responsible for:

- Working with students so they feel confident that any information they give is treated with respect and only made available to others if they consent to the disclosure or if there are exceptional circumstances (Safeguarding) as these override confidentiality;
- Exercising a duty of care and compassion in their dealings with students;
- Recognising the boundaries of their role. Knowing where, when and how to refer on or escalate urgent concerns;
- Upholding confidentiality;
- Promoting inclusive practice regarding students' mental health;
- Personal Tutors, Subject Tutors, Performance Coaches and Counsellors must consider mitigating circumstances when dealing with performance, deadlines and attendance;
- If a student shows signs of mental health concerns staff must offer or seek appropriate guidance based upon the level of presenting need.

All managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff adhere to this policy and that relevant liaison is carried out to support students;
- Ensuring support is effective in supporting students to maintain academic performance.

Inclusive Support team is responsible for:

- Assessment of students with mental health conditions;
- Identifying needs of individual students;

- Writing Individual Student Support Plans;
- Provision of appropriate support and guidance;
- Tutor liaison.

Mental Health First Aiders are responsible for:

- Being receptive, listening without judging, offering support (within the BMet Mental Health First Aid framework);
- Recognising the early signs and symptoms of common mental health illnesses;
- Signposting individuals to appropriate places for support (Togetherall, online websites, self-help literature, support groups, GP etc);
- Being an advocate and promoting greater awareness of mental health and actively work towards reducing stigma around mental health;
- Encouraging a culture of positivity and wellbeing within the college community;
- Communicating any significant concerns to the relevant designated persons, (Designated Safeguarding Lead – students, HR/Line Manager - staff);

All employers and work placement providers are also responsible for:

- Ensuring inclusive practice regarding students' mental health.

6. Students Responsibilities

Students with mental health conditions are encouraged to disclose any current conditions and medications at the earliest opportunity so appropriate support can be provided.

We encourage students to:

- Take reasonable steps to maintain their physical and mental health. However, if they are feeling concerned about their mental health, we would encourage them to discuss this with their tutor or pastoral & wellbeing staff as soon as possible.
- Work towards the maintenance of an open, inclusive and non-stigmatising community within the college.
- Treat each other as an individual and respect one another, recognising and respecting the experiences of others.
- Make suggestions on college procedures/relevant Policies through the learner voice process.

The wider student cohort should respect and value all students and be aware that any discriminatory language or behaviour around mental health will be challenged. Students supporting friends and peers should understand the limits to their roles and know how and when to refer on by using college wide referral mechanisms such as [Speakup](#) or by talking to their tutor.

7. Fitness to Study

The College seeks to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment where students are able to study and perform to the best of their ability and reach their full potential. The College will support students and make reasonable adjustments to help them reach the appropriate standards for success in their studies and on their placements.

However, the College also needs to respond appropriately to situations where signs of ill health (including mental health difficulties, psychological, physical, personality or emotional disorders) are having a serious impact on the functioning of individual students or the wellbeing of others around them. If you perceive there may be a risk when speaking to a student, please consider the following:

- Will this person be at increased risk of harm to themselves or others if they engage in or continue a programme of academic activity?
- Will this person be at increased risk of harm to themselves or others if they intend to start or complete a placement for their course?

Where these circumstances arise, the question of fitness to study or practice will be considered in line with the Positive Behaviour Policy.

8. Further Guidance

The College understands that there may be occasions when it is not possible to adhere to all parts of the policy. Personal Tutors, Subject Tutors, Mental Health First Aiders, Performance Coaches or Counsellors can, with permission of the student concerned, contact outside agencies for the benefit of the student. If it is felt there is a risk of harm to themselves or others, student confidentiality may be breached, and appropriate outside agencies or parties may be informed. Where such a matter arises, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads must be informed.

9. Data Protection and Confidentiality

The College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this policy it will receive personal data of a confidential and sensitive nature and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Sensitive personal data and confidential information will only be disclosed to third parties with the express informed consent of the student. However, there may be occasions where The College is obliged to disclose and/or request information, notwithstanding that the student has refused consent, these include:

- Where the student's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety of others; and / or
- Where a member of staff of the College would be liable to civil or criminal penalty for failure to disclose.

10. Relating Policies

This policy is established in accordance with the Colleges linked policies on Child Protection & Safeguarding, Inclusive Learning Support Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy and Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

