

The Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA)

2024 - 2025

Updated Version for 24/25 Academic Year

Let's
Talk

student mental
health agreement



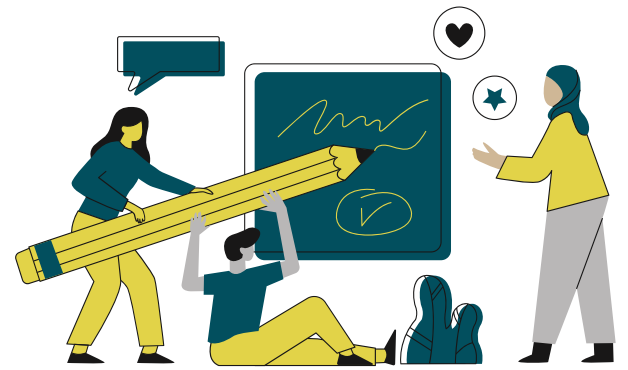
THE UNIVERSITY
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About Us

We are proud to jointly present our **second edition of the Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA)**, which has been reviewed in preparation for the 2024-25 academic year. This agreement is part of the **National Union of Students (NUS) 'Think Positive'** Student Mental Health Project, which sets a clear framework to help promote and develop our mental health support provisions for students.

Promoting positive wellbeing and raising awareness of issues that affect our student population is key in helping us to foster healthy attitudes towards mental health.

This Student Mental Health Agreement aligns with our **Strategy 2030**, following three overarching principles: *fostering a welcoming community, achieving excellence while being considerate and respectful, and acting with ambition and integrity.*

In addition, '*Mental Health Promotion*' is one of the *four* priority areas of the University's **Student Mental Health Strategy**, alongside: *Leadership, Mental Health Support, and Impact* and all of which we endeavour to address with our SMHA.

The agreement has been created **with and for students** and we look forward to further progressing with our shared goals over the next year together. You are the future of the SMHA and we want to hear as many voices as possible from our student community. Have your say by sharing your views and experiences with us on our designated **Padlet** page, and follow our **Instagram** (@uoe_wellbeing) for the latest student mental health and wellbeing updates.

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Andy Shanks, Director of Student Wellbeing: _____

"Providing support for students and enabling them to maintain positive mental health and wellbeing is an institutional priority for the University. Working in partnership is the best way both to support people and to improve services, and working in such close collaboration with the Students' Association and the Sports Union is a crucial part of this. Our Student Mental Health Agreement brings together an impressive and comprehensive set of information on the mental health and wellbeing support that is available for students, and within the document we cover areas such as resources, support services, building community and a sense of belonging, awareness raising, training and skills development. All of this work aligns with our University Student Mental Health Strategy, as well as with the work we are doing both on curriculum transformation and to improve the student experience. We will continue to work in partnership with the Students' Association and the Sports Union as we monitor and evaluate the impact of the services and initiatives we are delivering, and as we continue to improve the ways in which we support student mental health and wellbeing"

Indigo Williams, Students' Association VP Welfare:

"It is such a joy to announce that the Student Mental Health Agreement has been re-affirmed for the 24/25 academic cycle! With incorporated feedback regarding the inaugural year of SMHA, we are able to present this document to students with even more optimism for the support they will receive over the next two semesters. There are so many incredibly accessible and tangible resources at UoE for its community to utilise in bolstering mental health. One of my primary objectives this year is to overhaul the communications structure the University uses to convey information about where, when, and how to wield such services to students' benefit. SMHA represents the extensive mental health aid the University offers, but it is clear that miscommunications and misinformation about them abound. With the seminal work that is SMHA, it is my goal to dispel these in favour of transparent and ubiquitous messaging that easily guides students to the support they seek."

Why is Mental Health Important?



According to the *Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities Report* and *The University Mental Health Charter*, **mental health** is a spectrum of experiences that range from good mental health to mental distress/illness (Universities UK, 2023). **Wellbeing** refers to the wider physical, social, and economic experiences we have, including for example how we learn and realise our abilities, how we respond to stressors and challenges, and how we contribute to society (Universities UK, 2023).



Physical and mental health go hand in hand. It is important that we nurture them both! This SMHA guide provides you with an overview of the services and support available to you through the University. 1 in 4 people are impacted by mental ill health, and we know that students face specific stressors that contribute to this. This can become apparent during assessment hand-in, exam time, or feeling a lack of a support network. Therefore, we want to support you to engage in meaningful day-to-day action to make time for your wellbeing.



The *New Economics Forum* presents the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**, which is a framework of actions we should strive to fulfil in our everyday lives which are evidence-based contributors to positive overall wellbeing. **Staying active, socialising and connecting** with supporters and friends, consistently seeking **learning** opportunities, **giving** to others and taking time to be **mindful** are the key strategies towards improved mental and physical health, and subsequently overall wellbeing.

Let's Talk - Social Context & Relevance



Let'sTalk Mental Health and Wellbeing is a campaign in which The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh University Sports Union have partnered with the Students' Association to support positive student mental health and wellbeing. Let's Talk is activity-orientated and focuses on self-care and wellbeing management, as well as opening up a conversation about mental health. The Let's Talk team have also been in contact with many University departments, such as ResLife, Health and Wellbeing, Chaplaincy, etc. to share resources (both digital and physical), collaborate on potential future events, and collectively work on the visibility of the campaign:

- Various **mental health resources** are made available to students, such as workshops/lectures on the BIG topics - depression and anxiety, eating disorders, suicidal feelings, neurodiversity, etc.
- **Digital content**, like video discussions between students and staff that focus on reducing societal stigma surrounding mental health, is created to support students struggling with their mental health.
- **Physical resources**, such as bookmarks and wallet cards are used to communicate to students the available mental health resources.

Let'sTalk Mental Health and Wellbeing also strives to create relevant to student **mental health themes**. These are not only intended to help and support students, but also encourage destigmatising conversations and collaboration across the University community. Therefore, during our review of this year's SMHA, we identified an opportunity to increase the growth and awareness of both the Let's Talk campaign and the SMHA; we have now adopted the already-established Let's Talk branding and colour palette, keeping our communication of mental health and wellbeing initiatives - including the SMHA - consistent and recognisable.



The University has recognised the amount of pressure and hardship the **cost of living crisis** has put on students. Besides the already outlined support, the University has increased the financial support available to all matriculated students and has made the application process easier. The University provides a dedicated webpage to **Cost of Living** which guides you to available resources and helpful information.

The University also acknowledges the adverse impact of major global conflicts on students' mental health. Hostile global events undoubtedly cause **enormous distress to our community of students**. The University offers **mental health support** to all students through the University Counselling Service, the Chaplaincy and Listening Service, and the Student Wellbeing Service.





Monitoring & Reviewing Progress

The University has a thorough understanding of our collective duty to make meaningful progress towards our student mental health and wellbeing objectives. Thus, we continually ensure the quality of our contributions via regular use of evaluation measures.

Across the year, large amounts of student data is gathered through questionnaires, feedback forms, focus groups, interviews and the University's **Student Life Survey**. The Student Life Survey is a comprehensive series of questions aiming to gain insights from students about the overall Edinburgh student experience; including but not limited to the academic experience, wellbeing experience and experience with University support.

The **Student Panel** is also pivotal in providing the views of students on a variety of topics, as calls for students to participate in our research are regularly distributed to the Panel mailing list. If you would like to be involved in sharing your views on different aspects of student life, sign-up to the Panel on the webpage. Gathering such qualitative and quantitative data can help us better evaluate our students' wellbeing needs.

All of our mental health and wellbeing resources listed are monitored and evaluated locally, on an ongoing basis. Student Experience Services also engage in student focus groups to encourage open conversations with students, and regularly monitor incoming data through our services, allowing us to evaluate our progress of this agreement.

Success of Active Wellbeing activities are monitored through number of membership numbers, number of fixtures and rates of fixture completion; as well as numbers of attendees at activities or events and the large-scale member feedback survey which occurs once per annum.

Although the SMHA is a two-year long commitment - i.e., 2023-2025 - it's important that we hold ourselves accountable to our pledge, openly sharing our updates and progress with you. We also recognise the ever-changing social climate which we live, thus consider this updated agreement crucial for the new academic year.

As well as these procedures, this SMHA review was complemented by additional meetings and consultations with support services and students, who helped us to develop full awareness of our progress and successes so far, work that is still to be done and new focus areas for the upcoming year, relevant to the 'current' mental health stressors for students (as of August 2024).

During our evaluation, we recognised that we may want to approach gathering the views of student in an alternative format; moreover, we launched the **SMHA Padlet page**, to facilitate some powerful collective brainstorming! Visit the **Padlet** and add to it anytime throughout the year; share your thoughts, experiences, feedback, and feel free to add to the ideas of others too! The Padlet page will be constantly monitored and comprehensively reviewed as part of next year's process.



SMHA Timeline and Goals

01

What we have done and is currently available

- Implemented a new sector-leading model of Student Support for UGT & PGT students
- Mindfulness and psychoeducational workshops;
- Student Counselling Service run Skills for Life and Learning workshops;
- The Listening Service running 24/7;
- Committed to online self-help and resources from Togetherall, SilverCloud (CBT), and Feeling Good App;
- Active Bystander and online modules for Student Leaders;
- Consent training workshop available to all students;
- #NoExcuse campaign for ending sexual harassment and violence on campus
- Peer Support - PALS, Peer Mentoring, and Global Buddies;
- Staff mental health training for students in distress and with ongoing mental health situations;
- Introduced the Equally Safe Team to support students who have been affected by gender-based violence;
- Expanded the Residence Life team who support students who live in university accommodation
- Liberation Campaigns creating a space where self-defining students can come together.

02

What we are doing currently and for the future

- Continue to develop the Report and Support platform which now includes reporting on racism, bullying and hate;
- #NoExcuse (in development with students this year);
- Continue to encourage students to seek support when they need it through the Chaplaincy, Student Counselling Service, and Student Wellbeing Service;
- Encourage students to tell the Disability and Learning Support Service if they are struggling with university life due to any disability, so that they receive the right support **at any time in their university journey**;
- Development of a group on drugs and alcohol - to foster a harm reduction approach in the University (working with students this year);
- Improve the international student experience in collaboration with them;
- Sense of belonging in the classroom, University and city (in development with students this year);
- Wellbeing events run by Student Wellbeing Service twice every month on campus;
- Continue to provide opportunities, programmes and services for our community to get active.

24/25 Review of SMHA

Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we are doing currently and for the future

Continue to develop the Report and Support platform which now includes reporting on racism, bullying and hate.

#NoExcuse (in development with students this year).

Continue to encourage students to seek support when they need it through the Chaplaincy, Student Counselling Service, and Student Wellbeing Service.

Encourage students to tell the Disability and Learning Support Service if they are struggling with university life due to any disability, so that they receive the right support **at any time in their university journey.**

24/25

Progress and Evaluation

Produced new information animation for students to increase visibility. Providing workshops to Schools & Professional Services to educate staff on supporting their students.

Work with EUSA on representation of students.

Launched new content series on our Wellbeing Instagram page, disseminating key information to students via short reels. Aimed to better understand what information is not very clear by giving students the opportunity to submit their queries anonymously, which were addressed via Q&A with the services.

Created collaborative Instagram reels in partnership with the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS), showcasing the various roles within the service and introducing the team members to students via video media. Content has been created with various staff members with each one reinforcing the message that students can reach out to the service at any time. Hearing the same information from various friendly faces, across many social media posts, contributes to making such information common knowledge.

24/25 Review of SMHA

Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we are doing currently and for the future

Development of a group on drugs and alcohol - to foster a harm reduction approach in the University (working with students this year).

Improve the international student experience in collaboration with them.

Sense of belonging in the classroom, University and city (in development with students this year).

24/25

Progress and Evaluation

We have drafted a 'harm reduction statement' which we plan to launch in Semester 1 of Academic Year 24/25. This will be accompanied by communications for awareness to students and staff. The University is collaborating with CREW on providing awareness training for staff and looking into student training. Students will be consulted on this. We are also working with the Student's Association and the Students For Sensible Drug Policy group. All of this is guided by the Universities UK Drug Taskforce work.

We worked with the international student representative, inviting them to meetings and committees to raise awareness of international student issues.

The Sense of Belonging group is currently working with various members of staff to create guidance on belonging in the classroom. Over the summer, the group partook in a successful workshop last week with academics, including a high number of online programme directors, which will inform our approach to belonging amongst online spaces.

24/25 Review of SMHA Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we are doing currently and for the future

Wellbeing events run by
Student Wellbeing Service
twice every month on
campus.

Continue to provide
opportunities, programmes
and services for our
community to get active.

24/25

Progress and Evaluation

Student Wellbeing Service delivered 84 Proactive events across the academic year which were opened to all students. A total of 3560 student participants attended the events, which included activities such as:

- Mindfulness and Stress management sessions.
- PGR speed networking – Connecting PGR students.
- Rest, Recharge and reset events – a break away from study or exams.
- Wellbeing Café – drop in and have a hot drink and a chat with wellbeing team.

The Active Lives team offered their first ever summer programme this year, offering a weekly schedule of fun, free and friendly opportunities for physical activity throughout the entirety of summer. This programme of activity provided students with a stable outlet to nurture their wellbeing, as many classes and degree programmes take a break from classes over the summer. Active Lives events provided a fantastic space for students to come together, meet new friends and explore/familiarise with the city of Edinburgh. For students arriving in Edinburgh in advance of Welcome Week, this facilitated the chance to form connections with peers.

Active Lives events offer an array of movement opportunities ranging from games like rounders and badminton, light jogging routes, cycling (where students are provided with a bike and helmet, free of charge) and walks around the city.

24/25 Review of SMHA Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we wanted to do in the two years

Developing further support
for Widening Participation
(WP) students.

24/25

Progress Update

The **Edinburgh Cares** team take a holistic (and trauma informed) approach to student's wellbeing and all students are treated with unconditional positive regard. We delivered training to Student Advisors on the issues affecting and the needs of WP indicated students and students who fall under our corporate parenting duties (care-experienced and estranged students), as well as student carers.

- Through our 1:1 meetings with students and via our student newsletters we encourage students to seek support for their wellbeing by accessing available University services or by connecting them with relevant community supports (i.e., we make referrals to the appropriate Wellbeing team).
- Students who fall under the Edinburgh Cares remit met with the Curriculum for Transformation team to discuss their needs.
- We create a sense of belonging for all students who fall into our remit by having regular gatherings throughout the year including trips away from campus. Our activities often have an active / outdoor theme for example '*roll and a stroll*'.
- Our activities take place at crucial times in the academic calendar such as during exam periods, in the run up to Christmas, and over the summer break.
- We advocate for students when students cannot speak for themselves and ensure they are involved in any decisions made about them. This provides students with a supportive scaffold during crisis events.
- We work closely with the Prescribe Culture team to ensure students know about this project.

24/25 Review of SMHA Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we wanted to do in the two years

Sense of Belonging group
development.

Develop Suicide Awareness
Training for students and
staff.

24/25

Progress Update

The group worked on a number of events for students to improve belonging, including Break From Study; PGT Dissertation Celebration and Festive lunches. The group are creating a 'Belonging in the Classroom' guide for academics.

The **University's Suicide Safer Strategy** was accepted by the University Executive in early 2024 and work has been ongoing since on training over 400 student-facing staff with **PAPYRUS**, and on improving student placements experience. The strategy uses UUK's Mentally Healthy Universities guidance as its framework and was worked on by academics in the field, University wellbeing staff, EUSA and students. A web page for this strategy is launching shortly.

24/25 Review of SMHA Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we wanted to do in the two years

Wellbeing in the curriculum
work as part of curriculum
transformation.

24/25

Progress Update

The Edinburgh Lead Well Project is currently focussing on bringing together academic, professional services and student support staff members together, to exchange expertise and insights, and explore innovative approaches to integrating wellbeing into the curriculum, as well as to allow meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and synergies to emerge across participants. To achieve this goal a Community of Practice has been established, which is housed in a Teams space, and facilitated by regular email communications and at least one in-person meeting per term.

The group are exploring best practice examples for integrating wellbeing initiatives into teaching and learning processes, one of which includes the Engelhard Project from Georgetown University.

A lot of synergies and collaborations have already emerged between participants.

Currently the emphasis of the Edinburgh Lead Well Project is to keep developing the Community of Practice, facilitating engagement of our members, the sharing of ideas and evidence-based resources and initiatives aimed at embedding wellbeing in the curriculum. Our focus is to keep developing and nurturing an engaging, active and thriving community of professionals working together to facilitate the embedding of wellbeing in the curriculum. We are looking forward to continuing this work in the new academic year.

24/25 Review of SMHA Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we wanted to do in the two years

Developing further the
Transitions programme on
induction of students in the
University.

24/25

Progress Update

In the last year, our teams especially focused on supporting the first transition into University with an effort to reduce anxieties and concerns and ensure all students are aware of the support opportunities to foster a more positive University experience and a sense of belonging. It is the University's role to provide clear, prioritised information with simple instructions to enable all entrants to become familiar with the university, its resources and processes. With simplified and aligned messaging and activities that focus on new students' needs and expectations, we are confident that this will reduce overwhelm, allow for more engagement and overall support better mental health.

- Aligned messaging, timing and tone of all University emails that introduce students to the University and School communities.
- The University uses social media channels ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)) to celebrate and welcome new students and encourage students to attend and positively engage with their induction activities.
- This year, 99% of subjects of study were represented on the [Events app](#), enabling students to plan their own induction programme and find opportunities to attend activities of interest.
- Refinement to the University's Induction Guiding Principles, which guide and support colleagues to focus their induction activities on helping students to connect with other students, to learn about the support opportunities and how to ask for help and motivate them to get involved and take ownership of their own experiences.

24/25 Review of SMHA Timeline and Goals

23/24

What we wanted to do in the two years

Continue developing the **Let'sTalk** Campaign through events and new resources.

Consider the role being active has to play in supporting student wellbeing when devising strategies.

24/25

Progress Update

Adopted the Let's Talk branding for the SMHA, an opportunity to boost the visibility and awareness of both campaigns. Aligning the SMHA with the pre-established Let's Talk brand identity allows us to clearly communicate the purpose and aims of the SMHA: destigmatising mental health, valuing the student voice, and supporting students to the best standard possible.

The Wellbeing Service and Active Lives have coproduced the 'Take 5' programme, focusing on movement and mental health awareness. Students can be referred to partake in a five-week course with a small group of peers, to learn about and explore the benefits of physical activity on mental wellbeing.

SMHA Updated Goals for 24/25

03

What we want to do in the next year



- Further develop the work of the Sense of Belonging group;
- Create an online calendar for students to find suitable wellbeing events;
- Wellbeing Service to launch central wellbeing office supporting a central space to meet with students in private confidential spaces, as well as a new Student Wellbeing Lounge at Murchison House;
- Organise Suicide Awareness Training for students;
- Further enhance the Transitions programme informed by the success of changes for new students this year;
- Continue to consider the role being active has to play in supporting student wellbeing when devising strategies.

I think we should...

We Want Your Feedback!

Talk to us on the [SMHA Padlet page](#). Anytime, anywhere!



Mental Health Education Resources

The following mental health resources will help you **learn more** about mental health, **reduce any stigma around mental health**, and provide you with **strategies to cope** with low mood, stress, anxiety, etc. Student feedback gathered together to support annual service evaluations has provided backing that these resources improve students' studies and wellbeing.

1



Mindfulness and Psychoeducational Workshops

The University's Chaplaincy and Student Counselling Service offer online and in-person **workshops on mindfulness** for *pain, sleep, managing stress, expressive writing*, etc.

2



Therapets and Paws on Campus

Therapets help students with stress relief and wellbeing. Therapets sessions last 15-20 minutes, in which you can enjoy the company of trained dogs. If you would like to attend, please keep an eye on the Students' Association's website and book your free time slot.

Paws on Campus is a new canine-assisted intervention for students, who are struggling with high stress, low mood, anxiety, or other wellbeing issues. Read more information on the Paws on Campus website.

3



Online Wellbeing Tools

Along with the Student Counselling Service, the University partners with several mental health support platforms - SilverCloud (CBT), Togetherall, and Feeling Good App. These online self-help platforms can help with reduction of symptoms of anxiety, low mood, depression, and stress.

Wellbeing Resources

4

Arts and Crafts



The **Arts and Crafts workshops and events** in the University provide students with an opportunity to release stress and escape from responsibilities for a little bit. The **Craft and Sewing Society** in the University give students the opportunity to be creative and create different items - from keychains to clay modelling. Besides meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre every week, they also organise various social events, such as pub quizzes.

5

Wellbeing Service Events



The **Student Wellbeing Service** hosts various events throughout the academic year to support all students with their mental health and wellbeing. These events are designed to help students deal with the stresses of studying at university while maintaining healthy relationships. Some of the topics covered in the past have included sleep, speed networking, how to take care of yourself whilst looking after your friends, and how to rest, relax and recharge before taking exams.

6

Cultural Events



Cultural events, such as cinema, ballet, museum and art exhibition visits, are great ways for students to take a break. Various *societies* are involved in cultural events, such as the **Arts and Heritage Society**. They organise plays, film nights, concerts, social events. Students can watch the performances and/or participate in the productions. The University also has a **Prescribe Culture** wellbeing support initiative.





Active Wellbeing Resources

The importance of **active living for wellbeing** has been well documented, particularly within the student body. At Sport at Edinburgh, there is **something for everyone**. The University offers a wide range of opportunities for students to participate in sport and active health programmes, with 70 sports clubs, **world class facilities** and services across campuses. There are opportunities year-round for students to get involved and meet new people. Success of sport activities is monitored through membership numbers; fixture completion rates and number of fixtures; attendance at activities or events; member feedback survey that occurs once per year.

Sport at UoE: Available Resources for Students



Events – Throughout the year we deliver a whole host of events for staff and students, ranging from tree planting to dance performances, winter runs to yoga and mindfulness retreats.

Gym & Group Exercise – Sport & Exercise offer **flexible and affordable membership packages** for everybody. All memberships include access to our group exercise programme with over 100 instructor-led sessions a week.

Outdoor Activities – our team of experienced Instructors deliver **outdoor activities** on the water and on land, for staff and students who need a break from the city and a chance to enjoy the shore of Loch Tay.

Sports Clubs – with 70 student led **sports clubs welcoming members of all abilities**, there are opportunities to continue your sport, learn a new one and meet new friends. Clubs run training, trips, fixtures, one off events and social activity throughout the academic year.

Intramural Sport – the Sports Union offers an **intramural programme** where you can enter a team into friendly leagues with groups of coursemates or friends. Intramural sport is a great low commitment sporting offer, with eight sports included in the programme.

Recreational Sport – opportunities to **experience a range of sports on a commitment free basis**, throughout the academic year.

Workshops & Learn To Activities – we provide short courses to learn new skills and grow confidence in a range of different activities across a variety of locations.

Sports Societies – The Students' Association offers various societies that can help students to stay active in fun and relaxed environments, such as the **Yoga Society**, **Modern Dance Society** and **Ballroom Dancing Society**. Joining a sport's team or a society allows students to make friends and feel part of a community, bonding with others over a shared interest.

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SPORTS UNION



Active Wellbeing Resources

Active Lives



The **Active Lives** programme hold an amazing array of weekly movement events for free. Absolutely everyone is welcome to come along and get involved and students can book a place on as many events as they wish via **MyEd Events Booking**. However you prefer to move, there will be an event for you. No experience is necessary to attend any of the sessions, it's all about encouraging students to partake in physical movement to benefit your mind, body and soul. The Active Lives team is friendly and welcoming, and there is never any pressure on students. The priority is for everyone to come along and have fun with new friends. Active Lives events are about enjoying yourself in supportive environment to move around in whichever way you are able/feel comfortable! It's a safe and social space. Active Lives have over **290 free bookable spaces per week** across their core term-time activity offerings, which include:

Feel Good Walks – The Active Lives team deliver an opportunity to gently improve general fitness, make new friends and enjoy Edinburgh's fresh air. Feel Good Walks are hosted across Central, Kings and Easter Bush campuses.

Just Play Sport Sessions – open to all University students and staff, Just Play is an opportunity to try new sports with no associated costs. Sessions are suitable for all abilities, no experience necessary!

Learn to Run – free 10-week couch to 5k programme! It is designed for beginners and teaches techniques to help grow your confidence and stamina. Students will be supported by experienced and Active Lives Run Leaders who will offer encouragement and motivation every step of the way. As well as learning the basics of running, you will be part of a small group of like-minded individuals - a great way to make new friends and connections!

Social Cycle – provides a fun, friendly and free group cycle around Edinburgh. Every session offers a trained instructor to lead the cycle, road safety education and provides a bike and helmet for your use. It's a great opportunity to get some fresh air and take notice of the natural environment around you to help boost your mood. **The University's Transport Team** also provide an incredible array of resources to encourage students to become involved in cycling. Visit the **Transport webpage** for detailed information on how to access free cycle training, bike maintenance help and storage around campus.

Take 5 programme is a joint initiative between University of Edinburgh Sport & Exercise and the Student Wellbeing service that seeks to act as a vehicle for lifestyle change by **encouraging participants to be open minded and reflect on how engaging physical activity can positively impact their mental wellbeing**. Over the course of 5 weeks, participants who are *referred to the programme by the Student Wellbeing Service*, take part in a variety of activities on a weekly basis for 2 hours on Wednesday afternoons.

Tackling Discrimination & Promoting Equality

Through student work and feedback, we have found that support for international students is a priority for our students. Within the next two years, we will work with our international student community on how their experience is improved by evaluating **Student Life Survey** results and engaging with student focus groups.



Promotion of Equality

The University has a strong policy on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). The **Race Equality and Anti-Racist (REAR)** is a University Executive Standing Committee, and it aims at promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion to support students and staff. The Students' Association also offers **Liberation Campaigns** (*Women's, Disabled Students, LGBTQ+, Trans and Non-Binary, and Black and Minority Ethnic Officers*) which exist to create a space where self-defining students can come together, discuss the issues affecting them.

Response to Gender-Based Violence, Racism and Hate

The **Report and Support** platform has been developed where students can report any distressing events they have been through, or they have witnessed in relation to *sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking, racism, hate, and bullying*. Students can report via the online platform - either anonymously or with their contact details - or by emailing **reportandsupport@ed.ac.uk**.

All reports which are not anonymous should expect to be contacted by **The Equally Safe Team** or the University's **Intercultural and Anti-Discrimination Adviser within 48 hours** to discuss next steps and support available to you.



Equality of Wellbeing

The **Chaplaincy Listening Service** is available to both staff and students of all faiths and none. It offers **confidential, non-judgemental listening**, and **can refer students for further support** and wellbeing resources if needed. Students can use the service to talk about anything: academic life and struggles, relationship difficulties, loneliness and loss, mental health, etc. Email **listening.service@ed.ac.uk** or drop by the Chaplaincy Centre at **1 Bristo Square** to make an appointment.

You Speak,
We Listen



FOR EMERGENCY OR URGENT MATTERS OUT OF HOURS, PLEASE CONTACT UNIVERSITY SECURITY ON: 0131 650 2257

SECURITY & THE EQUALLY SAFE TEAM AIM TO RESPOND QUICKLY & PREVENT HATE CRIME BASED ON RACE, RELIGION, ETC. AND CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR STUDENTS.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

The University of Edinburgh has a **zero tolerance policy** for any type of harassment and gender-based violence (GBV). A task force was created around sexual violence on campus and the following resources are the outcomes of this work.

Tailored to Your Needs Support



The **Equally Safe Team** and the **Advice Place** supports students who have been harassed or are GBV victims. The Advice Place has also **published short guidelines for being safe in Edinburgh**.

Taxi Scheme



Emergency Taxi Scheme helps students who cannot pay for their taxi to get them home safe. The Students' Association has partnered with *Central Taxis* and opened an account with them, which students can use in an emergency. Students have to *request a taxi on the Students' Association account*, quoting **EU99** and providing their **name** and student **matriculation number**. The Students' Association will then contact the student to make sure that student got home safely, offer any additional support, and request repayment of the fare.

Report and Support



Report and Support is a platform which can be used by students to report any instances of GBV **anonymously** or **with their contact details**. Should the student choose to provide their contact details, a member of the Equally Safe Team will contact them within 48 hours to offer them **confidential and non-judgmental advice** and support. *Reports made through this system are not formal complaints to the University*, but the Equally Safe Team can **support students** should they wish to make a formal complaint to the University or contact the police.

Further Resources



Courses for a Safe University Environment

The **Consent Matters Course** covers sexual consent, relationships, bystander intervention training, and recognition of abusive behaviours and lack of respect. The **Tackling Harassment Course** addresses all forms of discrimination, hate, and harassment and how members of our University community can recognise and interfere safely in such problematic scenarios.

All courses have been updated for the new academic year!



#NoExcuse

#NoExcuse campaign developed by the Students' Association encourages us all to take collective responsibility for ending sexual harassment and violence on campus. Through that campaign, anyone who has experienced sexual or gender-based violence can find support and help. They can also signpost students seeking support to professional services if necessary.



Tackling and Eradicating Violence

Equally Safe Partnership run by Edinburgh City Council provides guidance and support for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.

Being an Active Bystander training is provided to societies, sports clubs, student reps and residence assistants. Themes, such as sexual violence, harassment, and abuse - all which can occur in student settings - are addressed and ways to challenge such behaviours are discussed.

LGBTQIA+ Community

Trans Students' Hub



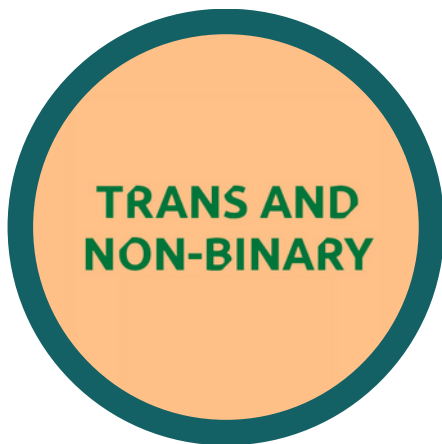
The University's **Trans Equality Policy** has been reviewed, and is now split into students and staff policies. The policy focuses on the support the University can provide for students who arrive having transitioned, or who go through transition while studying here. This policy will launch in Semester 1 so please look out for it! This work has led to the launch of our **Trans Student Hub** - our webpage which brings together support, learning and information for our trans students, staff and those supporting them. The University has also purchased new online awareness training for staff which will also be launched in Semester 1

PrideSoc



The University promotes **LGBTQ+ equality** in the University's community. The Student Advisers, Student Support Office, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee provide support to students identifying as part of or allies to the LGBTQ+ community and thereby create a positive and inclusive environment for all students. The **PrideSoc - The Edinburgh University LGBTQ+ Society** also organises social, charity, educational, and political events for the LGBTQ+ community. The society allows people of all sexualities, gender identities, races, faiths, and abilities to connect and be supported.

Students' Association Trans & Non-binary Campaign



The **Trans & Non-Binary Campaign** exists to create a supportive community where self-defining trans and non-binary students at the University can come together, discuss their experiences, and campaign for a more just University and world.

Academic and Non-Academic Support

The University of Edinburgh offers various forms of support to students for both academic and non-academic life. There are many schemes run by Schools, by the Students' Association, or more widely by the University.



The **Institute for Academic Development (IAD)** offers online resources (Study Hub), study development workshops, and one to one study skills consultations, to help students succeed with their studies. The IAD supports all students to learn and study effectively and tailors support to your type of degree programme:
Undergraduate
Postgraduate Taught
Postgraduate Research



The new student support model is based on extensive work with students and staff within the Higher Education sector. In the new model of student support, peer support is delivered locally on your programme. Ask your **Student Adviser or graduate school** for more information. They can advise and signpost students to peer and other support services.

Peer-Assisted Learning Schemes (PALS) help new students understand better the material and thereby ease their way into university academics. Each undergraduate programme usually has a PALS scheme, in which second year and above students help respectively first- and second-year students (e.g., PsychPALS, EconPALS). Through the PALS schemes, more experienced students share their knowledge, skills, and approach to academic work with new and less experienced students. The weekly sessions involve many activities (e.g., matching exercises), which help reduce the pressure students feel when it comes to academic studying. **Have a look** to find if your course has a PALS scheme.

There is also a **PG Peer Support** group helping PG students feel more at ease with being a postgraduate student, get used to life in Edinburgh, and make new friends.

The **Library** also provides support to students with their studies and research. Students can book a one to one consultation with the **Academic Support Librarian** for their subject, for literature searching, referencing and systematic review advice and support.

Peer Mentoring is a scheme in which a trained mentor is assigned to first-year students from **Widening Participation** backgrounds. Peer mentors are usually older students who help their mentees in various areas, such as settling in university life, academics, socialisation, and hobbies. Each new student taking part in this service can access up to **6 sessions per semester**. Some schools also offer **specialised peer mentoring for PG and PhD students** (e.g., *Business PhD 1-2-1 Mentoring*). If you are interested in this, please get in contact with your **School/Deanery** for more information on their peer support schemes.

Global Buddies is a scheme run by the University for visiting international students. Global Buddies allows current students to help visiting international students adjust to life at the University of Edinburgh. The Buddies work with new students navigate support and social opportunities.



Academic and Non-Academic Support



Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances are services that support students when they are struggling with their mental or physical health, loss or bereavement, etc. Extensions give students a short amount of extra time to complete an assessment, while Exceptional Circumstances are relevant to when an adverse situation has significantly impacted a student's ability to complete their assessments or exams.

The Advice Place is a team of professionally trained advisors, who offer students support on various matters, such as accommodation, mental health, finances, and academics. Students can get in touch online, by phone, or in person at Potterrow and King's Buildings House.

Student Counselling Service supports all students in the University through short-term counselling, self-help, online resources, workshop series, and if necessary signposting to other services. The self-help resources are provided in many formats, such as recommended readings, videos, and podcasts. The University also partners with several online platforms, namely **FeelingGood app, Togetherall, and SilverCloud**. These platforms can help and support students with their mental health, including the reduction of symptoms like stress, anxiety, and low mood.

Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) offers students academic support that is tailored to their needs and the way their disability, learning difference, neurodivergent or health condition affects their studies. The DLSS also offers support to all students with long term mental health and/or autism-related conditions through **Mental Health and Autism Specialist Mentors**. The DLSS offer drop-in appointments students **every Monday to Friday, between 9am and 4pm**, with a **Disability and Inclusion Officer** at the **Health and Wellbeing Centre** in Bristo Square. Any student can attend these drop-in sessions to ask any questions they may have or access support with registration for the service.

Students can register with DLSS at any point during their studies.



The Wellbeing Service is made up of Wellbeing Advisers across the different schools and deaneries who you can speak with if you are experiencing any wellbeing-related issues that are affecting your health, wellbeing, studies or personal life. The Wellbeing Advisers can then provide you with advice and guidance, and will also be able to discuss and link you up with our other University services, as well as signposting to external agencies.

Links

National Union of Students (NUS) 'Think Positive' Student Mental Health Project

<https://thinkpositive.scot/collection/student-mental-health-agreement/>

UoE Strategy 2030

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030>

UoE Student Mental Health Strategy

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/student-mental-health-strategy>

Padlet

https://padlet.com/uoe_smha/edinburgh-university-s-student-mental-health-agreement-share-fx5fhaozqpnvsuyh

UoE Wellbeing Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/uoe_wellbeing/

Five ways to wellbeing

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/wellbeing-services/self-help>

Let'sTalk Mental Health and Wellbeing

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/yourvoice/campaigns/mentalhealthwellbeing>

Cost of Living

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/finance/cost-of-living-help>

Student Life Survey

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/student-voice/student-surveys/student-life-survey>

Student Panel

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/student-voice/student-panel-2>

SMHA Padlet

https://padlet.com/uoe_smha/edinburgh-university-s-student-mental-health-agreement-share-fx5fhaozqpnvsuyh

Papyrus

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

UoE Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/edinburghuniversity/>

UoE Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/UniversityOfEdinburgh/>

Chaplaincy

<https://chaplaincy.ed.ac.uk/mindfulness/mindfulness-workshops>

Student Counselling Service

<https://student-counselling.ed.ac.uk/services/life-learning-skills>

Students' Associations Website

<https://edin.eusa.ed.ac.uk/events>

Paws on Campus

<https://health.ed.ac.uk/research/current-research/paws-on-campus>

Student Counselling Service

<https://student-counselling.ed.ac.uk/>



Links

SilverCloud (CBT)

<https://ed.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/>

Togetherall

<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

Feeling Good App

<https://student-counselling.ed.ac.uk/self-help/apps-podcasts-ted-talks-relaxation-recordings/feeling-good-app>

Craft and Sewing Society

<https://chaplaincy.ed.ac.uk/societies-groups/non-religious-and-belief-societies/crafting-and-sewing-society>

Wellbeing Service Events

<https://student-wellbeing-service.ed.ac.uk/events-hosted-student-wellbeing-service>

Arts and Heritage Society

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/artsandheritage>

Prescribe Culture

<https://library.ed.ac.uk/heritage-collections/in-the-community/prescribe-culture>

Sport and Exercise Facilities

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/>

Sport and Exercise Events

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/news>

Sport and Exercise Gym Membership

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/gym-memberships>

Outdoor Activities

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/firbush>

Sports Clubs

<https://www.eusu.ed.ac.uk/clubs/>

Intramural Programme

<https://www.eusu.ed.ac.uk/intramural/>

Commitment Free Recreational Sport

<https://www.eusu.ed.ac.uk/recsport/>

Workshops & Learn To Activities

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/keep-active/workshops>

Yoga Society

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/yogasoc>

Modern Dance Society

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/moderndance>

Ballroom Dancing Society

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/ballroomsoc>

Active Lives

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/keep-active>



Links

Feel Good Walks

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/keep-active/health-walks>

Just Play Sport Sessions

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/keep-active/just-play-sport>

Learn to Run

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/keep-active/learn-to-run>

Social Cycle

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/keep-active/social-cycle>

Cycling Facilities & Services

<https://transport.ed.ac.uk/cycling/facilities>

Take 5

<https://sport-exercise.ed.ac.uk/news/take-5>

Race Equality and Anti-Racist (REAR)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/students>

Liberation Campaigns

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/yourvoice/yourrepresentatives/liberationofficers>

Report and Support

<https://reportandsupport.ed.ac.uk/>

The Equality Safe Team

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/work-on-gender-based-violence/about-equally-safe>

Chaplaincy Listening Service

<https://chaplaincy.ed.ac.uk/the-listening-service>

Advice Place

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace>

Advice Place Guidelines

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/harassmentsafetyandcrime/citysafety>

Emergency Taxi Scheme

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/about/policy/welfare/taxischeme>

Consent Matters Course

<https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/students/consent-matters-and-tackling-harassment>

Tackling Harassment Course

<https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/students/consent-matters-and-tackling-harassment>

#NoExcuse

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/yourvoice/campaigns/noexcuse>

Equality Safe Partnership

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/children-families/equally-safe-edinburgh-committee>

Being an Active Bystander

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/yourvoice/campaigns/noexcuse/consent>



Links

Trans Equality Policy

<https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/trans>

Trans Student Hub

<https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/trans>

Trans & Non-Binary Campaign

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/TransNonBinaryCampaign>

EUSA Find a Student Group

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/list?type=peer>

PG Peer Support

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/PGPEERSUPPORT>

Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

<https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/>

IAD Support (Undergraduate)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate>

IAD Support (Postgraduate Taught)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/taught>

IAD Support (Postgraduate Research)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/doctoral>

The Library

<https://library.ed.ac.uk>

Academic Support Librarian

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/academic-support-librarians>

Peer Mentoring

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/access-edinburgh/settling-in-at-university/peer-mentoring>

Widening Participation

<https://wpguides.ed.ac.uk>

Global Buddies

<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/global/globalbuddies>

Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances

<https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/extensions-special-circumstances>

Support Counselling Service

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling>

Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS)

<https://disability-learning-support-service.ed.ac.uk>

Mental Health and Autism Specialist Mentors

<https://disability-learning-support-service.ed.ac.uk/students/mental-health-and-autism-spectrum-mentor-support>

The Wellbeing Service

<https://student-wellbeing-service.ed.ac.uk>

The Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) 2024 - 2025

Thank you for taking the time to read through UoE's SMHA.
We hope it is helpful to you - the student at the University of
Edinburgh!

**By signing this agreement, the University of Edinburgh,
the Edinburgh University Students' Association, and the
Edinburgh University Sports Union jointly declare to
implement the Student Mental Health Agreement 2024 -
2025.**

Andy Shanks

UoE

**Indigo
Williams**

Students' Association

**Philine
Rouwers**
Sports Union

**Reviewed and updated in August 2024 by:
Sophie Reid (PPLS student) with Rebecca Shade**



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Edinburgh
University
Students'
Association

