

EDA COLLEGE



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Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy¹

Version Control/History

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Applies To	All students enrolled at, or applying to, EDA College, and all staff, contractors, partners and volunteers who interact with students in connection with their studies
Classification	Public

¹ Aligned with the University Mental Health Charter (Student Minds / UUK), the UUK Stepchange and Suicide-Safer Universities frameworks, the Equality Act 2010, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and OfS Conditions B2, B3, B7 and E6

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1. Policy Statement

EDA College (“the College”) is committed to creating a learning, working and living environment that promotes positive mental health and wellbeing, prevents harm, supports students experiencing mental ill-health and responds promptly and compassionately to those at risk. The College recognises that mental health and wellbeing are foundational to academic success, the realisation of student potential and equality of opportunity in higher education.

This Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy adopts a whole-college approach informed by the University Mental Health Charter framework, the Universities UK (UUK) Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities and Suicide-Safer Universities frameworks, and the principles of stepped care. It supports the College’s compliance with the Office for Students Regulatory Framework (in particular conditions B2, B3, B7, C3 and E6), the Equality Act 2010, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the College’s safeguarding and data protection obligations.

This Policy is for both students and staff. It does not constitute medical advice and the College is not a clinical mental health provider. Where students need clinical support, the College works in partnership with NHS, primary care and specialist services and supports students to access these in line with their needs and consent.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Set out the College’s overarching commitment to a whole-college approach to student mental health and wellbeing.
- Define the categories of support available to students through stepped care, from universal preventative activity through to crisis response.
- Establish clear arrangements for risk assessment, information sharing, and engagement of trusted contacts and external services in line with applicable law.
- Define the College’s arrangements for responding to crises, including risk to life, suicide, self-harm and serious mental illness.
- Set out the College’s commitments to inclusive support across diverse student groups.
- Define roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for staff, students and partners.
- Provide a framework for monitoring and continuous improvement, drawing on data, student voice and external evidence.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All students enrolled on credit-bearing programmes delivered by, with or on behalf of EDA College, including international, mature, distance, part-time and apprenticeship students.
- Applicants and offer-holders, in respect of pre-arrival information and transition support.

- All staff (academic and professional services, including agency, casual, sessional and visiting staff) and contractors who interact with students in connection with their studies.
- Volunteers, partners and (where applicable) host families, placement providers and accommodation providers in respect of students under the College's care.

Concerns about staff mental health and wellbeing are addressed through the Staff Wellbeing arrangements and HR support routes (Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health and the Bullying and Harassment Policy where relevant).

4. Legal, Regulatory and Sector Framework

- Equality Act 2010 – including the prohibition on discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and the duty to make reasonable adjustments. Mental health conditions can amount to a disability where they have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activities.
- Mental Health Act 1983 (as amended) – in respect of compulsory admission and treatment in serious mental illness.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 – in respect of decisions involving students who may lack capacity to consent at the relevant time.
- Care Act 2014 – including duties to safeguard adults at risk of abuse or neglect (England).
- Children Act 1989 and 2004 – where the College engages with under-18 students or younger family members of students.
- Suicide Act 1961 (as amended) – in particular the offence of encouraging or assisting suicide.
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 – where staff need to raise concerns about safeguarding or wellbeing.
- Higher Education and Research Act 2017.
- Office for Students Regulatory Framework, in particular conditions B1 (academic experience), B2 (resources, support and student engagement), B3 (student outcomes), B7 (student support) and C3 (Student Protection Plans), and the condition on harassment and sexual misconduct (E6) effective from 1 August 2025.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent duty).
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 – including special category data (data concerning health) and lawful bases including vital interests.
- OIA Good Practice Framework on supporting students.
- University Mental Health Charter (Student Minds / UUK).
- UUK Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities framework.
- UUK Suicide-Safer Universities guidance.
- AMOSSHE (Student Services Organisation) good practice publications.
- NICE guidance on common mental health problems (CG90), self-harm (NG225) and suicide prevention (NG105 and others as updated).
- NHS pathways including Talking Therapies (formerly IAPT), Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Teams, and Mental Health Emergency Services.

5. Definitions

5.1 Wellbeing

A positive state of physical, mental, emotional and social health that enables students to thrive, learn and contribute, even in the presence of challenges.

5.2 Mental Health

A state of mental wellbeing, recognising that mental health exists on a continuum and that everyone has mental health that fluctuates over time.

5.3 Mental Ill-Health

A diagnosable disorder or condition that significantly affects a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behaviour and their ability to function.

5.4 Whole-College Approach

A coordinated approach in which the curriculum, pastoral support, environment, partnerships, governance and culture all contribute to mental health and wellbeing.

5.5 Stepped Care

A model that matches the intensity of support to the level of need, from universal prevention through to specialist clinical care.

5.6 Crisis

A situation where there is an immediate or imminent risk of serious harm to a student or another person, including suicide attempts, life-threatening self-harm, acute psychosis or other serious deterioration in mental health.

5.7 Trusted Contact

A person nominated by a student in advance to be contacted by the College in defined circumstances of serious concern about the student's wellbeing, in line with section 12.

5.8 Reasonable Adjustment

An adjustment made under the Equality Act 2010 to remove or reduce a substantial disadvantage faced by a disabled student.

5.9 Vital Interests

A lawful basis under Article 6(1)(d) of the UK GDPR for processing personal data where it is necessary to protect the vital interests of the data subject or another natural person.

6. Vision and Whole-College Approach

EDA College takes a whole-college approach in which mental health and wellbeing are a shared responsibility across the institution. We aim to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all students through inclusive curriculum design, manageable workload, sense of belonging and a supportive culture.
- Prevent harm and reduce risk by identifying issues early and supporting students before they reach crisis.
- Support students experiencing mental ill-health through accessible, evidence-informed services and partnership with specialist providers.
- Respond promptly and compassionately to students in crisis, with clear arrangements for life-saving intervention and support.
- Recover and learn through systematic review, engagement with student voice and continuous improvement.

Our approach is informed by the four domains of the University Mental Health Charter (Learn, Support, Live, Work) and adapted to the College’s scale and context.

7. Stepped Care Model

The College’s student mental health and wellbeing offer is structured around five steps, from universal prevention through to crisis response. Each step is supported by clear referral routes, training and partnerships.

Step	Focus	Examples
Step 1 – Universal Wellbeing	Promotion of positive mental health for all students.	Inclusive curriculum design; mentally healthy assessment and workload; induction; sense of belonging activities; communications and campaigns; physical activity and social opportunities.
Step 2 – Self-help and Information	Resources for students experiencing mild concerns or seeking to maintain wellbeing.	Online wellbeing resources; signposting to NHS Talking Therapies and other community services; peer support; podcasts; Big White Wall / equivalent platforms (where in place).
Step 3 – Targeted Support	Direct College support for students with identified mild-to-moderate concerns.	Wellbeing advice appointments; group programmes (e.g. on resilience, anxiety management); short-term Mentor or Wellbeing Advisor support; signposting and referral.
Step 4 – Specialist and Clinical Support	Coordinated support for students with moderate-to-severe difficulties, working with specialists.	Working with the student’s GP, NHS Talking Therapies, community mental health teams, eating disorder services, and (in line with consent) family or trusted contacts; Disabled Students’ Allowance support; reasonable adjustments and approved interruption.
Step 5 – Crisis Response	Immediate response to acute risk to life or serious deterioration.	Suicide-safer response (see section 11); engagement with NHS crisis services, ambulance services and police; activation of the Trusted Contact (where in place); coordinated review.

8. The College Wellbeing Service

The College operates a Wellbeing Service within Student Services, which provides:

- Confidential 1-2-1 wellbeing support sessions, normally short-term, with onward referral where required.
- Drop-in and timetabled appointments at College premises, online and (where required) by telephone.
- Specialist support including for international students, mature students, care-experienced and estranged students, students with caring responsibilities, and students with disabilities.
- Group programmes and workshops on common areas of need (e.g. anxiety, low mood, transition, exam preparation, sleep, substance use).
- Liaison with academic personal tutors, programme teams and external services on behalf of, and with the consent of, the student.
- Coordination of reasonable adjustments, in conjunction with the Disability and Wellbeing arrangements.
- Out-of-hours signposting to NHS 111, the Samaritans (116 123), SHOUT (text 85258), Papyrus HOPELINE247 (0800 068 41 41 for under-35s) and other recognised services.

The Wellbeing Service does not provide clinical psychiatric care or formal psychotherapy. Where this is required, students are supported to engage with NHS or independent specialist services.

9. Curriculum, Assessment and Academic Environment

Academic design is a powerful determinant of student wellbeing. The College therefore:

- Embeds mentally healthy design in programmes, with manageable workload, balanced assessment loads, clear expectations and meaningful feedback, in line with the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.
- Provides academic personal tutoring, mentoring and routine check-in opportunities so that concerns can be raised early.
- Supports inclusive curriculum design, drawing on Universal Design for Learning and the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Provides reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 (see section 13) and access to the Extenuating Circumstances Policy where unforeseen circumstances affect assessment.
- Engages staff in awareness training, including suicide awareness, mental health first aid and safer recruitment for safeguarding-related roles.
- Embeds wellbeing literacy in the curriculum where relevant to the discipline.

10. Living, Social and Digital Environment

The College recognises that students' wellbeing is shaped by the wider environment, including the social, physical and digital spaces in which they study. The College will:

- Provide accessible, well-managed physical premises, with quiet spaces, prayer/contemplation rooms (where in place) and accessible facilities.

- Support student-led communities, societies and peer support networks.
- Promote a respectful and inclusive culture in line with the Bullying and Harassment Policy and OfS condition E6.
- Apply Safer Online and Acceptable Use of IT principles to digital environments, including the VLE and social media used in connection with study.
- Where College or partner accommodation is provided, work with accommodation providers on wellbeing arrangements, residential life and crisis response.

11. Suicide-Safer Approach

The College adopts a Suicide-Safer approach informed by UUK guidance and recognised evidence. The aim is to reduce the risk of suicide, intervene effectively when risk is identified, and respond compassionately if a suicide or attempted suicide occurs.

Key components include:

- Awareness training for staff – including general awareness of warning signs and where to refer, with deeper training for those in front-line roles.
- Clear guidance for staff on how to respond to a student who may be at risk of suicide (Engage – Listen – Refer) and how to seek immediate support without delay.
- Engagement with NHS pathways, including community mental health teams, urgent mental health helplines and 999 / 111 services.
- Procedures for the Trusted Contact (see section 12) where there is serious concern about a student’s safety and engagement is appropriate and lawful.
- Sensitive and managed communications about suicide, in line with Samaritans Media Guidelines and Papyrus advice.
- Postvention arrangements following a death by suicide, including support to those affected, structured review, and engagement with the family in line with the family’s wishes and applicable law.

The College does not encourage assisting or encouraging suicide, which is an offence under the Suicide Act 1961.

12. Trusted Contact / Opt-In Disclosure

The College invites every student, on enrolment and annually thereafter, to nominate a Trusted Contact (also known as an Emergency Contact) and to consent in advance to that person being contacted by the College in defined circumstances of serious concern about their wellbeing, in line with Department for Education and sector guidance following the Hughes case.

The Trusted Contact arrangement:

- Is opt-in for the student, with clear privacy information and the right to nominate someone other than a parent (e.g. another family member, partner, friend or carer).

- Is invoked only where there is reasonable cause for serious concern about the student's safety or wellbeing, normally in consultation with the Designated Manager for Student Wellbeing or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- May be reviewed and updated by the student at any time.
- Operates alongside the College's power and duty to engage emergency contacts and emergency services where this is necessary in vital interests, regardless of opt-in (see section 14).

The Trusted Contact is recorded in the student record system and processed in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the College's Data Protection Policy.

13. Reasonable Adjustments and Approved Interruption

Where a student's mental ill-health amounts to a disability under the Equality Act 2010, the College has a duty to make reasonable adjustments. These are coordinated by the Wellbeing and Disability Service, with the student's involvement, and may include:

- Adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment (e.g. extended deadlines, modified examination conditions, alternative assessments where appropriate).
- Flexibility in attendance and engagement requirements, where consistent with academic standards and any UKVI sponsor duties.
- Coordinated support across academic, wellbeing and disability services, with named contact points.
- Use of mentoring, study skills and assistive technology funded through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) where eligible.
- Approved Interruption of Studies, where it is in the student's best interests to take an agreed period away from study, in line with the Approved Interruption Procedure.

Reasonable adjustments are made in a way that maintains academic standards and the integrity of intended learning outcomes, and are reviewed regularly with the student.

14. Confidentiality, Information Sharing and Data Protection

The College handles student mental health and wellbeing information with care and respect, in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the College's Data Protection Policy. The College will:

- Treat information confidentially and share it only with those who need it to support the student or to meet the College's legal duties.
- Process special category data concerning health on the basis of explicit consent or, in defined circumstances, on other lawful bases such as vital interests (UK GDPR Article 6(1)(d) and Article 9(2)(c)) or substantial public interest.
- Be transparent with students about what information is held, who it is shared with and why, through clear privacy information and individual conversations.
- Engage with families, friends, partners or trusted contacts on the basis of consent wherever possible, with the student's wishes guiding the approach.

- Override consent only where there is reasonable cause to believe that doing so is necessary to prevent serious harm to the student or another person, in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (where applicable) and section 12 (Trusted Contact).
- Engage with the police, ambulance and NHS services without delay where there is a reasonable belief of imminent serious risk to life.
- Keep accurate, proportionate records in line with the Records Management and Retention Policy.

Decisions about information sharing in serious cases are normally made by the Designated Manager for Student Wellbeing in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Data Protection Officer, with reasoning documented.

15. Engagement with the NHS and Specialist Services

The College works in partnership with the NHS and specialist services to support students with mental health needs. Practical arrangements include:

- Encouraging all students, including international students, to register with a local GP and providing information at induction.
- Maintaining established routes to refer students to NHS Talking Therapies, community mental health teams, eating disorder services and other specialist services.
- Engaging with NHS crisis services (NHS 111 Option 2 / urgent mental health helplines) and emergency services (999) in line with section 14.
- Working with partner organisations such as the Samaritans, SHOUT, Papyrus, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Beat (eating disorders) and BEAT services where applicable.
- Recognising that the College is not a substitute for clinical care, but is a key partner in supporting students through their wider care pathway.

16. Specific Issues

16.1 Self-Harm

The College's response to self-harm is informed by NICE guidance (NG225) and emphasises compassionate, non-judgemental engagement. Staff are trained to recognise signs of self-harm and to support students to access appropriate care, while respecting their autonomy and dignity. Suspected self-harm is responded to as a wellbeing concern and, where there is risk to life, as a crisis under section 11.

16.2 Eating Disorders

The College recognises that eating disorders are serious and potentially life-threatening conditions. Staff are trained to identify warning signs and to refer compassionately. The College supports affected students to engage with specialist NHS eating disorder services and considers reasonable adjustments and (where appropriate) approved interruption.

16.3 Substance Use and Alcohol

Where substance use or alcohol misuse affects a student's wellbeing or studies, the College responds through a supportive engagement informed by the Stepped Care model. Where there are wider

safeguarding, disciplinary or legal implications, the relevant procedures (Safeguarding and Prevent Policy, Student Disciplinary Procedure) operate alongside this Policy.

16.4 Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Hate Incidents

Students affected by sexual misconduct, harassment or hate incidents may experience significant impact on their mental health. They are supported through this Policy, the Bullying and Harassment Policy, the Student Disciplinary Procedure and (where applicable) external specialist services such as Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), in line with OfS condition E6.

16.5 Bereavement and Grief

Students experiencing bereavement are supported through tailored wellbeing arrangements, signposting to specialist services (e.g. Cruse Bereavement Care) and the Extenuating Circumstances Policy where assessment is affected.

17. Equality, Diversity and Inclusive Wellbeing Support

The College recognises that mental health is shaped by social, cultural and economic context. Targeted attention is given to:

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic students, including the cultural appropriateness of services and engagement with culturally specific organisations.
- LGBTQ+ students, including those experiencing distress related to identity, family relationships, harassment or transition.
- Disabled and neurodivergent students, with reasonable adjustments and inclusive design embedded across services.
- International students, including support for cultural transition, immigration-related stress and bereavement abroad.
- Care-experienced and estranged students, with named contacts and proactive engagement.
- Students with caring responsibilities or who are parents.
- Mature students returning to study.
- Students from low-income households, recognising the link between financial stress and mental health.

Wellbeing support is delivered in line with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Equality Objectives and PSED Statement and the Widening Participation and Outreach Policy, recognising the intersectional nature of inequality.

18. Communication, Engagement and Co-Production

The College engages students in the design, evaluation and improvement of mental health and wellbeing services. The College will:

- Engage student representatives in service development, in line with the Student Voice Policy.
- Conduct routine student surveys (including wellbeing-focused questions) and act on results.
- Co-produce campaigns and resources with students, recognising the value of lived experience.

- Make information about services accessible at induction, on the College website, the VLE and through targeted communications.
- Communicate sensitively about mental health and suicide, in line with Samaritans Media Guidelines and the College’s Communications Policy.

19. Staff Training and Capability

All staff receive an introduction to mental health and wellbeing as part of induction. Targeted training is provided for staff in front-line roles. Indicative expectations include:

Group	Indicative Training
All staff	Mental health awareness; how to recognise signs of distress; how to signpost; data protection and confidentiality.
Personal Tutors and front-line academic / support staff	Mental Health First Aid (or equivalent); ALGEE / Engage-Listen-Refer practice; safer language; support for students with eating disorders, self-harm and suicidal ideation.
Wellbeing Service staff	Specialist training and supervision appropriate to their role; safeguarding; risk management; clinical liaison; cultural competence.
Designated Safeguarding Lead and Designated Manager for Student Wellbeing	Senior-level training including suicide prevention and postvention, safeguarding, multi-agency working and information sharing.

Training is refreshed at least every two years, or sooner where evidence, regulation or sector guidance change.

20. Governance and Oversight

Mental health and wellbeing are matters of significant institutional risk and quality. Governance is provided through:

- The Academic Board, which approves this Policy and receives an annual report on student wellbeing.
- The Audit & Risk Committee, which provides independent oversight of related risks and assurance.
- The Senior Leadership Team, which oversees implementation through the Designated Manager for Student Wellbeing.
- A Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group (or equivalent committee), chaired by the Designated Manager for Student Wellbeing, including academic, professional services and student representatives, reporting to the Senior Leadership Team and the Academic Board.
- Termly reporting on demand, outcomes and incidents to the Senior Leadership Team.

21. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Key Responsibilities
Academic Board	Approves this Policy; receives annual reports on student wellbeing; ensures arrangements meet OfS expectations and the Public Interest Governance Principles.
Audit & Risk Committee	Independent oversight of risk and assurance arrangements relating to student wellbeing.
Principal	Holds executive accountability for student wellbeing.
Designated Manager for Student Wellbeing	Owens this Policy; chairs the Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group; coordinates the College's offer; reports to the Senior Leadership Team and the Board.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Coordinates safeguarding activity, including for students at significant risk; works with external safeguarding partners.
Manager of Student Services	Manages the Wellbeing Service and Disability and Wellbeing arrangements; ensures equity of access and effective referrals.
Manager of Academic Affairs	Ensures that programme design, assessment and academic processes support, rather than undermine, student wellbeing.
Heads of School / Programme Leaders	Embed wellbeing-informed practice in their area; engage with student voice; ensure staff are trained.
Personal Tutors and Teaching Staff	Provide a first point of contact and pastoral support; recognise warning signs; refer in line with this Policy.
Wellbeing Service Staff	Provide direct support, group programmes, signposting and onward referral.
Data Protection Officer	Advises on lawful information sharing, including in vital interests cases.
Students	Engage with support; share concerns at the earliest opportunity; respect the wellbeing of others; consider nominating a Trusted Contact.

22. Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The College will monitor the implementation of this Policy through:

- Termly reporting on service demand, response times, outcomes and incidents to the Senior Leadership Team.
- An annual Student Wellbeing Report to the Audit & Risk Committee and the Academic Board.
- Disaggregated analysis of demand and outcomes by characteristic to identify and address differential impacts, in line with the Equality Objectives and PSED Statement.
- Engagement with student voice through programme committees, surveys and the Student Voice Policy arrangements.
- Engagement with external evidence, including the University Mental Health Charter, UUK and AMOSSHE benchmarking, and NICE guidance updates.
- Structured review following any serious incident, including suicide or attempted suicide, with lessons fed back into prevention activity.

This Policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner where regulation, sector guidance or institutional learning require it.

23. Related Policies and Documents

- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Equality Objectives and PSED Statement
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Student Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Procedure
- Disability and Wellbeing Policy
- Approved Interruption Procedure
- Extenuating Circumstances Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Student Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy and DPIA Procedure
- Records Management and Retention Policy
- Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan
- Critical Incident Plan (where in place)
- Student Protection Plan
- Widening Participation and Outreach Policy

24. Approval

This Policy has been recommended by the Senior Leadership Team and the Academic Board and approved by the Academic Board of EDA College. It forms part of the College's suite of student-facing and governance documents and will be communicated to all staff via induction and the staff intranet, and to students via the student handbook, induction, the VLE and the College website.

End of Policy