

# Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources Toolkit

UKAT Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Special Interest Group (SIG)

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## Who we are

This resources toolkit was designed and collated by the **UKAT Mental Health and Wellbeing Special Interest Group (SIG)** to support Higher Education staff (e.g., personal tutors, departmental tutors) in their roles supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of both staff and students in their institutions. It brings together existing toolkits, charters, and frameworks, and provides links and lay summaries of key research in the field.

A link to relevant training and CPD available in the UK is also included.

Please note this is a work in progress and will be updated annually.  
If you would like to contribute resources to this toolkit, we'd love to hear from you!



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[Read our SIG aims >](#)



## Contact Us

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**Resources and Guidance Frameworks  
Freely available**

[Learn more about UKAT's SIGs >](#)

## UKAT's catalogue:

**Managing Students in Distress**

[Learn more about this course >](#)

This bite-sized online learning module offers a structure and practical tips to help you handle those situations when you are faced with a distressed tutee, whatever the nature of their distress.

UKAT also offers an in-person Managing Students in Distress workshop to universities that offers a hands-on, immersive way to develop the skills needed to respond effectively to students in distress.

## The University



### Mental Health Charter

**Hughes, G. & Spanner, L. (2024). (2nd ed.)  
Leeds: Student Minds**

The UMHC Framework was created to provide greater, evidence-informed clarity about the ways in which universities could develop their whole-university approaches to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students.

[Read the full article >](#)

### Advance HE

**Education for Mental Health Toolkit:  
Staff Wellbeing**

Toolkit focus: The wellbeing of university staff is important in and of itself. There is a clear and explainable relationship between staff wellbeing and student wellbeing. Universities must take a whole university approach to staff wellbeing if they wish to impact positively on student wellbeing.

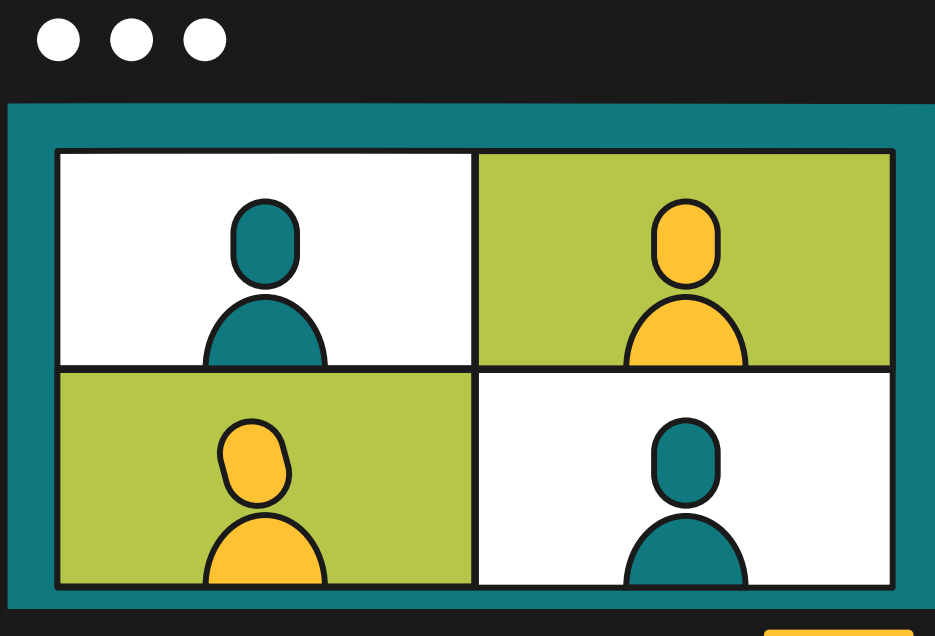
[Read the full article >](#)

## Advance HE

**Education for Mental Health Toolkit:  
When a student presents in distress**

Toolkit focus: Maintaining the boundaries of the academic role remains important. The guidance has been developed to support academic staff to respond effectively when students present to them in distress.

[Read the full article >](#)



## Stepchange

**Mentally healthy universities**

Mentally healthy universities is a refreshed strategic framework for a whole university approach to mental health and wellbeing at universities. It calls on universities to see mental health as foundational to all aspects of university life, for all students and all staff.

[Read the full article >](#)

**Access the self assessment tool**

[Discover here >](#)

## Student Minds (charity) and Mental Health Charter

Staff and student wellbeing  
Module 12 – Staff wellbeing/Staff development

- Workplace culture
- Working conditions
- Interventions to support good staff wellbeing
- Support for staff when experiencing problems with their mental health

[Learn more about Student minds >](#)

[Learn more about Mental Health Charter >](#)



### Charlie Waller Trust

Specific free course on HE wellbeing strategies to manage your own wellbeing. It gives people the confidence and skills to look after their own mental health. It could be useful in our role as PATs.

[Discover more >](#)

### Suicide safer universities

Universities are working to support their students and staff and to make their communities safer. Useful guidance for staff.

[Discover more >](#)

### Government blogs

These blogs have some useful links to support, though are mostly student focused rather than staff focused.

**Read *Mental health resources for children, students, parents, carers and school/college staff* >**

**Read *How we're supporting university students with their mental health* >**

# Training Courses

UKAT Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Special Interest Group (SIG)



UKAT provides a wealth of resources and training to support personal academic tutors (PATs) in their roles. Membership of the UKAT Mental Health and Wellbeing Special Interest Group (SIG) also offers opportunities for shared learning and a collaborative space to develop your expertise in supporting mental health and wellbeing.

[Learn more about UKAT's Professional Framework >](#)

## MHFA

### Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a training programme that equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to recognise the signs of mental health challenges, provide initial support, and connect individuals with appropriate professional help.

[Discover more >](#)

## i-act

### The Royal College of Psychiatrists accredited training

The UK's leading evidence-based and accredited mental health and wellbeing programme for understanding and managing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

[Discover more >](#)

## TRAUMA INFORMED

### Diploma in trauma and mental health informed schools and communities (practitioner status)

Universities such as Hull and Oxford Brookes have begun to use trauma informed approaches to support students and these could also support staff with mental health wellbeing needs. Many of these courses are aimed at schools and colleges but can be tailored to HE.

[Discover more >](#)

## Reflective Supervision training

Varied providers offer training in reflective supervision



Supervision can be a valuable tool for personal tutors. Group or individual supervision offers a structured space for tutors to share experiences, reflect on challenges, and develop their practice, while also providing restorative emotional support.

[BPS Approved Certificate >](#)

[CSTD Bath >](#)



# Evidence-informed Approaches

UKAT Mental Health and Wellbeing Special Interest Group (SIG)



## Active Listening (Supportive Listening)

Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding

- 1.Focus fully on the speaker
- 2.Avoid interrupting
- 3.Show interest
- 4.Avoid appearing -judgemental
- 5.Provide feedback

### How does it help?

Creates a safe space for students/staff to feel heard, reducing anxiety and isolation. Builds trust and emotional validation.

[Discover more >](#)



## Coaching (e.g., GROW model)

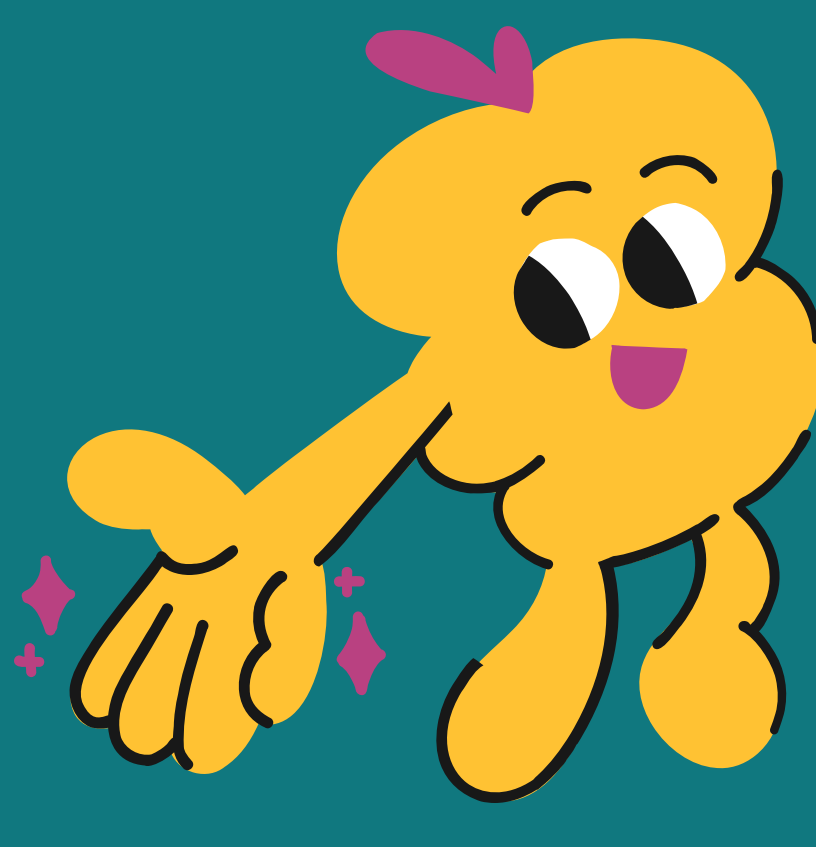
Coaching is a collaborative, goal-focused process. Tutors use questioning (GROW: Goal, Reality, Options, Will) to support clarity and problem-solving.

### How does it help?

Encourages autonomy, builds confidence, and reduces helplessness through structured support.

[GROW model >](#)

[UKAT's journal >](#)



## SUPERVISION

Supervision offers a reflective space to explore emotional and professional challenges. Common in health professions but increasingly relevant in HE.

As supervision is known to have benefits in the workplace, this raises the question: why isn't supervision routinely offered to academics?

### How does it help?

Enhances emotional resilience, supports well-being, and reduces burnout.

[Discover more >](#)



## Growth Mindset (Dweck)

Encourages the belief that abilities develop through effort and persistence. Helps students and staff reframe failure as learning. Mixed evidence.

### How does it help?

Reduces self-criticism and perfectionism. Builds psychological resilience and motivation.

[Discover more >](#)



## Counselling (Referral/Signposting)

There are many different types of counselling. While tutors are not counsellors, they can play a vital role in identifying signs of distress and referring students or staff to qualified professionals.

Counselling is often the preferred form of support offered by wellbeing and disability teams in higher education institutions for both students and staff.

As such, free access to counselling is typically available. However, it is important to acknowledge that long waiting lists can sometimes delay access to this support.

### How does it help?

Promotes early intervention for mental health issues. Helps manage boundaries and reduces risk of inappropriate support roles.

[Discover more >](#)



## Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

MHFA trains staff to spot signs of distress, provide initial help, and refer to appropriate services.

### How does it help?

Enables timely and appropriate responses to mental health crises. Builds confidence in addressing MH concerns.

[Discover more >](#)



## Trauma-Informed Practice

Recognises the impact of trauma on behaviour and well-being. Focuses on safety, trust, and empowerment.

### How does it help?

Prevents retraumatisation, promotes psychological safety, and builds empathy in tutor-student interactions.

[Discover more >](#)



## Reflective Practice

Regular reflection on experiences to improve practice. Can be individual or group-based (e.g., reflective journals, peer discussions).

### How does it help?

Aids self-awareness, emotional regulation, and reduces the build-up of stress or burnout.

[Discover more >](#)





# Research Articles

## Making a Stepchange? Investigating the Alignment of Learning Analytics and Student Wellbeing in United Kingdom Higher Education Institutions.

Wellbeing professionals should be included as key stakeholders in the development of learning analytics and student support policies and wellbeing considerations explicitly mentioned and taken into account

[Read the article >](#)

## WHO world mental health surveys international college student project: Prevalence and distribution of mental disorders.

This study reports initial results from the first stage of the WHO World Mental Health International College Student project, in which a series of surveys in 19 colleges across 8 countries were carried out with the aim of estimating prevalence and basic sociodemographic correlates of common mental disorders among first-year college students.

[Read the article >](#)

## Does the role of personal academic tutor have an impact on staff wellbeing?

Explores experience of acting as a PAT at a medium sized University. Researchers aimed to establish robustness of the PAT system, with focus on wellbeing of both staff and students. Research took place within context of growing concerns for student and staff wellbeing. A thematic analysis (n) 26 full time employees identified 3 key themes; self, others/ systems and resilience.

[Read the article >](#)

## 'Look after the staff and they would look after the students' cultures of wellbeing and mental health in the university setting.

The paper finds that it is important that institutions within higher education acknowledge and respond proactively to both staff and student wellbeing issues. To do so, institutions should seek to foster a sustainable and effective academic environment with a whole university approach.

[Read the article >](#)

## Wellbeing in the higher education sector: A qualitative study of staff perceptions in UK universities.

This paper presents findings from 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews with employees (academic and professional staff) in UK universities to understand staff perceptions of wellbeing and the impact of the HE context. Implications for bolstering wellbeing in practice and future research are discussed.

[Read the article >](#)

## Experiences of lecturers helping distressed students in higher education.

Study to investigate how often UK academics support students in distress.

[Read the article >](#)

## University staff experiences of students with mental health problems and their perceptions of staff training needs.

Study investigating university teaching staff experiences of, and training needs around, assisting students with mental health problems.

[Read the article >](#)

## Student Services, Personal Tutors, and Student Mental Health: A Case Study.

Research has shown that the role of academics regarding student MH is unclear for both parties; this creates risk that can lead to students not receiving timely support. This is particularly prevalent when gaps exist in relationships or understanding between academics and Student Services. This paper focuses on a practical example of work undertaken at the University of Derby.

[Read the article >](#)

## Student mental health: The role and experiences of academics.

Study based on interviews with 52 academics in 5 universities, investigating the role of academics in student mental health. These academics identified that responding to student mental health problems is now an inevitable part of the academic role. However, this crucial frontline role is currently invisible, and the higher education sector does not have the appropriate structures or cultures to assist academics.

[Read the article >](#)

## Significant Personal Disclosure: exploring the support and development needs of HE tutors engaged in the emotion work associated with supporting students.

Paper exploring the emotion work that academics perform when supporting students. An emotional labour framework is used to consider the effects on tutors of work intensification and performance requirements in learning relationships with students.

[Read the article >](#)

## Tipping point: The staff wellbeing crisis in higher education.

Literature suggests that academics are busier than ever- evidence of an undermining of academic professionalism, academic freedom and increased job insecurity in the sector. It is not possible for academics to position themselves outside of the performance culture and still be viewed as a valued team member. Concerns relate to the impact of this culture of performativity on the wellbeing of staff who work in UK higher education institutions.

[Read the article >](#)

## The benefits of good tutor-student relationships in the first year.

Students identified four characteristics of a 'good' tutor: helpful, caring, likeable, and hands-on. Students talked about multiple benefits of having a good tutor including increased help-seeking, studying harder, more interest in class, and improved well-being and belonging. The importance of the tutor role is underestimated and institutions would do well to better support these valuable staff.

[Read the article >](#)

## The Office for Students (OfS) mental health analytics project, an evaluation.

Project 2019 -22 2022 evaluated project which aimed to develop and implement proposals to deliver changes in student mental health outcomes, with an emphasis on testing new interventions and develop an evidence base on 'what works' for dissemination across the sector in MH support.

[Read the article >](#)

## Designing for wellbeing: An inclusive learning design approach with student mental health vignettes.

Student mental health is a growing concern for universities; increasing numbers of students are experiencing wellbeing issues, and distance learners are particularly at risk. Student vignettes that illustrate experiences of mental health difficulties in study are a valuable learning design tool; they have potential to support more inclusive practice by informing learning design.

[Read the article >](#)

## Staff experiences of providing support to students who are managing mental health challenges: A qualitative study from two Australian universities.

This paper explores the role of university staff in supporting students with mental health challenges, a critical but often overlooked aspect of student well-being.

[Read the article >](#)

## Tutoring the tutors: Supporting effective personal tutoring.

This paper examines personal tutoring in higher education from the tutor's perspective, focusing on their confidence, competence, and the support they receive. Research suggests that tutors often lack training and clarity about their role, which can impact their ability to support students effectively and lead to burnout.

[Read the article >](#)

## College Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Prior to and during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Paper investigating the impact of the pandemic and associated restrictions on the psychological wellbeing of college students.

[Read the article >](#)

## 'Getting in, getting on, getting out': Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff in UK higher education.

While many of the negative impacts of neoliberalism were common to all staff, BAME staff offered a collective narrative focussing primarily on injustice, bullying and racism- impacting on wellbeing. Most striking was the pain resulting from simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility of BAME staff, the continual questioning of their professional competence.

[Read the article >](#)

## Pressure vessels: The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff (20).

HEPI report investigating university staff mental health 2009-2016. Using data from 59 higher education institutions on referrals to counselling and occupational health services.

[Read the article >](#)

## Staff wellbeing in higher education: A research study for education support partnership.

This research study identified further research is required in order to understand what wellbeing activities and interventions exist in HE and what would be most helpful to staff. More research is needed to understand the relationship between wellbeing and the lived experience of staff working in Higher Education.

[Read the article >](#)

## Teaching Staff and Student Perceptions of Staff Support for Student Mental Health: A University Case Study.

This qualitative study explores both student and staff perceptions of the support provided by teaching staff to students struggling with mental health challenges.

[Read the article >](#)

## University Student Mental Health Survey 2020.

Report from the Insight Network investigating the prevalence and characteristics of UK students' mental health problems.

[Read the article >](#)

## Who cares for academics? We need to talk about emotional well-being including what we avoid and intellectualise through macro-discourses.

This article examines academic well-being by analysing published personal disclosures, highlighting the emotional suffering often hidden within academia.

[Read the article >](#)

## Not By Degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK's Universities, IPPR.

Report by IPPR investigating how student mental health can be improved across the sector.

[Read the article >](#)

## What do we know about university academics' mental health? A systematic literature review.

Systematic literature review of mental health of academics.

[Read the article >](#)

## Stress of university students before and after campus closure in response to COVID-19.

This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students' study-related stress and how individual and contextual factors influenced stress levels. Using longitudinal survey data from 274 students.

[Read the article >](#)

## A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of a Wellbeing Programme Designed for Undergraduate Students: Exploring Participants' Experiences Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Universities have developed initiatives to promote student wellbeing. This study considers 'Time to Thrive' (TTT), an online programme based on positive and coaching psychology / neuroscience literacy to support UG students to thrive at university. It examines effectiveness of TTT on wellbeing.

[Read the article >](#)

## Tutors' Responses to Student Disclosures: From "Suicidal Ideation" to "Feeling a Little Stressed".

This qualitative study examines how higher education tutors in Aotearoa New Zealand experience and manage student disclosures related to personal challenges, including racism, mental health, bereavement, and harassment.

[Read the article >](#)

## Supporting staff wellbeing in higher education.

This report presents the findings of a national study examining working life in UK HE institutions. 2046 academic staff were surveyed about psychosocial hazards they encounter, how they feel about tasks they do and the availability /usefulness of support mechanisms to manage their wellbeing. The psychosocial safety climate of their institutions was also examined along with mental health and work-life balance.

[Read the article >](#)

## Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on University Students' Mental Health: A Literature Review.

This is a literature review investigating the impact of COVID-19 on university students' mental health.

[Read the article >](#)