

MENTAL HEALTH PROCEDURE

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Monash University staff and students, with the exception of the former Monash South Africa campus.

PROCEDURE STATEMENT

This procedure outlines guidance to staff and students on how to foster good mental health, seek timely mental health support from the University, and provide assistance to someone who may be experiencing poor mental health.

1. Fostering Good Mental Health

- 1.1 Staff and students are responsible for taking reasonable care of their mental health while working and studying at the University. This will differ from person to person, but may involve:
 - maintaining a healthy lifestyle;
 - engaging in good mental health practices such as mindfulness;
 - keeping reasonable work and/or study hours;
 - making use of flexible working arrangements;
 - accessing peer support and mentoring; and,
 - seeking support to manage poor mental health.
- 1.2 Staff and students can participate in training offered by the University to develop:
 - skills to manage the demands of their work and study;
 - self-care strategies;
 - stress management techniques; and,
 - a better understanding of mental health, including Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention (see University's [Mental Health webpage](#)).
- 1.3 Staff and students can also access online and face-to-face mindfulness [programs and drop-in sessions](#). Mindfulness practice can help in managing personal, professional and academic stress, improving performance, strengthening relationships with others and boosting self-esteem.
 - 1.3.1 On request from faculties or schools, the University incorporates mindfulness into the core curriculum of its courses. The training is contextualised with a focus on students developing vocational, interpersonal and self-care skills. For more information or to contact a facilitator, see the University's [Mindfulness webpage](#).
- 1.4 The University runs a [staff Mental Health First Aid Ambassador](#) program. Ambassadors are trained to promote awareness and mental health literacy across the University and to offer mental health first aid. Staff can enquire about becoming an Ambassador by completing this [form](#).

2. Managers, Supervisors and Student Leaders

- 2.1 Staff in management or supervisory roles should promote a mentally healthy University culture and support those experiencing poor mental health by:
 - encouraging and modelling mentally healthy workplace practices;
 - addressing inaccurate or negative attitudes about mental illness;

- developing their communication and mental health first aid skills;
- ensuring they understand the University's duty to people with disabilities, which includes mental illness (see the [Reasonable Workplace Adjustments Procedure](#)); and,
- seeking advice from their [HR business partner](#) about workplace support for people experiencing poor mental health.

2.2 Staff who teach or supervise students, and students in leadership positions can:

- learn how to [support students in crisis](#);
- develop their mental health first aid skills (see the [Mental Health First Aid program](#)); and,
- explore information about how curriculum design and teaching practice can support good mental health, and how to manage their own wellbeing when working with students in distress (see [Enhancing Student Wellbeing](#) – external resource).

3. Seeking Support from the University

Counselling Services

- 3.1 The University provides free counselling services for all staff and students. Information on how to book an appointment can be found on the University's [Counselling website](#).
- 3.2 Staff and students who are travelling for their work or study with the University are covered by the University's travel insurance policies and can be connected to mental health services by the insurance providers.

Support for Staff and Students Experiencing Mental Illness

- 3.3 The University supports staff and students experiencing mental illness, for example, by assisting them to take leave from, manage the impact on, and be supported in returning to, work or study.
- 3.3.1 for staff: see the [Leave and Wellbeing Policy](#) and [Reasonable Workplace Adjustments Procedure](#) or contact Human Resources at hr@monash.edu; and,
- 3.3.2 for students: see [Assessment in Coursework Units: Adjustments to Assessment Procedures](#) (for coursework students) or leave provisions in the relevant [Handbook](#) (for doctoral and research master's students) or contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupportservices@monash.edu.
- 3.4 In determining how best to support staff and students with mental illness, the University will have regard to the inherent requirements of the person's position or course/unit of study.

Support for Carers

- 3.5 Staff who are caring for a person with a mental illness or other condition may be able to access carer's leave, depending on arrangements in place in their location.
- 3.6 Students who are caring for a person with a mental illness or other condition can [register as a carer](#) and discuss support options with [Disability Support Services](#) (DSS). Information on how DSS may be able to assist is available on the [DSS website](#).

4. Responding to Others Experiencing Poor Mental Health

- 4.1 When trying to assist others experiencing poor mental health, staff and students must not act beyond their expertise or comfort level. Following the general advice in this procedure and responding sensitively to someone in distress are important first steps, but the affected person should seek advice from a mental health professional as soon as possible.
- 4.2 If staff or students feel they are experiencing, or witness someone else experiencing, a mental health crisis (for example, if they are considering self-harm or suicide), they should:
- contact emergency services if they fear for their safety or the safety of others, and then, if on campus, report the matter to [Campus Security](#);
 - attend, or recommend the person attend, a University health service (if available) or hospital emergency room; and/or
 - seek assistance, or encourage the person to seek assistance, from a mental health professional.
- 4.3 If it is not a crisis, but a student or staff member appears to be experiencing poor mental health, staff and students should talk to the person about their concerns and encourage them to seek professional advice or contact a [Mental Health Ambassador](#) in their faculty or division to provide Mental Health First Aid.

5. Privacy

- 5.1 The University understands that health-related disclosures are sensitive and is committed to protecting personal information.

- 5.2 If a staff member or student discloses that they are experiencing mental illness, staff and students receiving this disclosure should be mindful of the person's privacy and treat information confidentially. Staff should refer to the [Data Protection and Privacy Procedure](#) for information on their privacy responsibilities.

DEFINITIONS

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| Good mental health | Good mental health refers to a state of wellbeing in which a person realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to their community (Royal Commission Into Victoria's Mental Health System Interim Report , 2019, p. 16). |
| HR Business Partner | A member of the Monash HR community who operates as a strategic partner responsible for providing a range of human resource services for an assigned Faculty or Portfolio. |
| Mental health crisis | When someone is acutely unwell with mental illness. They could be feeling suicidal, experiencing severe anxiety, reacting to a life problem, having a psychotic episode – or a combination of all of these symptoms. |
| Mental health first aid | Assistance provided to a person experiencing poor mental health in the first instance, until professional help is available. Free Mental Health First Aid training is available for all staff and students. |
| Mental illness | A medical condition that is characterised by a significant disturbance of thought, mood, perception or memory (Mental Health Act 2014 (Vic)). |
| Mindfulness | Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, Jon, 1994, <i>Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life</i> , New York, Hyperion, p. 4) |
| Poor mental health | Poor mental health is a combined term for referring to mental illness and psychological distress (Royal Commission Into Victoria's Mental Health System Interim Report , 2019, p. 16). |

GOVERNANCE

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| Parent policy | Mental Health Policy |
| Supporting schedules | N/A |
| Associated procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Progress Committee Procedure • Assessment in Coursework Units Adjustments to Assessment Procedures • Data Protection and Privacy Procedure • Behaviour in the Workplace Procedure • Employee Assistance Procedure • Family Violence Support Procedure • Flexible Work Procedure • Health and Wellbeing Procedure • Healthy Eating and Monash Procedure • Leave and Wellbeing Policy • Learning and Teaching Policy • Reasonable Workplace Adjustments Procedure • Sexual Misconduct Response Procedure • Sick and Carer's Leave Procedure |
| Legislation mandating compliance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Discrimination Act (1992) (Commonwealth) • ESOS National Code Standard 6, Overseas students support services • Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) • Fair Work Act 2009 • Fair Work Regulation 2009 • Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) • TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework S. 2.3, Wellbeing and Safety |
| Category | Operational |



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