



Student Wellbeing & Mental Health Policy

Policy Title	Student Wellbeing & Mental Health Policy			
Course type	HE	x	Practical	x
School	London	x	Online	x
Approved by	Academic Board			
Owner	Head of Registry			
Date Approved	May 2018			
Date of Review	June 2021	Date of next review:	July 2022	
Version	2.1			
Publication	Staff Access	x		
	Student Access	x		
	Public Access via Point Blank website	x		

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MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION & PRINCIPLES

“Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

(World Health Organization)

Point Blank aims to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. The health and wellbeing of each student is extremely important to us, and as such, aim to support each student as much as possible during their studies. We continually strive to enhance our student experience and support them to reach their full potential, which includes academic, as well, as social and cultural fulfilment.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental health difficulties students may experience during their time at Point Blank. On average, one in four adults will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. Mental health difficulties can have a detrimental consequence on student studies and overall wellbeing. It is our duty to provide a framework to keep ensuring that student mental health wellbeing is promoted and mental health difficulties addressed and taken seriously.

We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and supportive environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental health problems.

2. SCOPE

This policy describes Point Blank’s approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. Point Blank, also, aims to provide a supportive environment where people who experience mental health difficulties or declare a disability can access necessary support. It is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff. This policy should be used in conjunction with other relevant policies at the school.

3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Point Blank aims to create a college wide approach to mental health and wellbeing ensuring that all students and staff have best possible experience and feel supported throughout their studies or whilst supporting students. Point Blank believes in a whole school inclusive ethos.

Point Blank aims to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma throughout the year via various means and events (e.g., whole school events, midterm wellbeing emails to students and staff, enhancing communication between wellbeing team and student facing staff, etc.)

In addition to providing expertise knowledge catered to specific curriculum needs, staff members are also committed to ensure that the mental wellbeing of the student members of the college are taken into account. In addition, the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our VLE Essential Wellbeing Module.

3.1 Policy aims

- Promote positive mental health awareness in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental health problems
- Highlight support to staff working with students with mental health issues
- Highlight support to students experiencing mental health problems
- Encourage pathways for students to seek help and find necessary support
- Promote staff confidence in responding to a student in distress
- Create an environment where confidentiality and dignity is promoted throughout college ethos.
- Ensure mental health disclosure is accepted and not stigmatised
- Ensure students are not discriminated against by mental health difficulties

4. MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY SUPPORT

Point Blank aims to help students who are struggling with student life due to physical, personal, emotional or mental health issues. Point Blank provide a range of support and guidance for students experience a variety of disabilities and mental health difficulties.

Point Blank aims for all students to feel welcomed and supported throughout their studies and ensure that they are able to fulfil their potential. We aim to provide all-inclusive support to all our

enrolled students including those who have mental health difficulties, specific learning difficulties and disabilities. More information can be found on our website, such as, how to declare a health issue, how to access support, how our counselling sessions work and who to contact if help or advice is needed. At Point Blank we also strive to help new and international students integrate into life at college and London.

4.1 Sources of support

- **Instructors (student facing staff)** – Instructors are often the first point of contact and know their students best. Therefore, it is important that staff feel confident on how to respond to students concerns and those who need additional support. Instructors will be informed on how to signpost and where they can refer their concerns to.
- **Wellbeing Team** – at Point Blank we have a dedicated wellbeing team who have experience in dealing with student concerns and are often the first point of contact between staff and students.
- **Counselling Service** - If students are experiencing difficulties and would like to speak to someone professional, Point Blank offers a counselling service for students needing more urgent or professional help. The student counsellor will be able to offer emotional support and will work together with us to help students during your studies at Point Blank.
- **Crisis Support Organisations** - If a student is struggling to cope, or experience difficulties, there are external services students can access outside school hours and within their local communities. Point Blank provides student and staff with a list of possible helplines and organisations that can provide additional support and information on mental health (please see Appendix B).
- **VLE** – students can access and learn more about support available at Point Blank or how to manage and take care of their mental health by accessing the Essential Programme Information Modules under ‘You as a Student’ and Essential wellbeing modules on the VLE.

Depending on student needs and conditions, Point Blank offers a range of support. Examples of support and adjustments on offer are:

- Academic writing support
- Change of assessment method
- Speech recording / recognition technology
- Help with time management and organisation
- Practical arrangements and guidance
- emotional support (counselling service)

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and other support may be provided on request.

4.2 Supporting students to declare support needed

At Point Blank, we encourage the importance of declaring any mental health difficulties or additional support that students may experience or need. This ensures that students will be able to access support which will facilitate their learning. Students can declare before they begin their studies or at any time over the course of study, however we encourage declaring as soon as possible so that students can make the most out of the support we offer.

Students can declare in a number of different ways:

- On the Student Details Form on the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment).
- On your application form, if you are applying for a Higher Education Course.
- In person by speaking to Wellbeing Team at the Orsman Road office
- Over the phone on 020 7729 8448

4.3 Signposting

At Point Blank, we ensure that staff work within a supportive network and are confident in signposting students to the relevant support needed within the college or available in the local community. It is important that we help our students in becoming aware of sources of support. More detailed list of what support is available within the local community, external to Point Blank, can be found in Appendix B.

Students can access the information of relevant support via the Essential Programme Information Modules under 'You as a Student'. In addition, students can access more information about mental health and wellbeing via the Essential Wellbeing module found on the VLE.

At Point Blank, relevant sources of support are displayed in communal areas and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum throughout their studies at Point Blank. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it

4.4 Mental Health Support

Early intervention and prevention can be the best way to ensure any student experiencing mental health difficulty can have the necessary support available. However, staff don't need to be mental health experts in order to intervene or respond to students' mental health needs. Just giving presence,

listening without judgement and taking student concerns seriously, can go a long way in making the student feel supported.

Students experience many different pressures that can affect them whilst studying at Point Blank, therefore we feel that it is extremely important that our students feel supported during their studies at Point Blank. If students feel stressed, homesick, lonely or are dealing with more long-term issues, they can get in touch with The Wellbeing Team. They will be able to meet with each student to have a chat and determine how we can help them. Support can also be provided through help with time management, academic writing support and prioritising workloads. At Point Blank, we also provide further information about our free counselling service or, if appropriate, links to external organisations and helplines.

4.5 Staff Mental Health Training

It is important that staff feel confident and competent to respond to students who may need help and are able to provide the necessary support. In addition, having an understanding of the range of mental health problems students may experience alongside possible triggers and mental health concern signs encountered in classes, can ensure that staff are capable of responding to students at earliest stage possible and signpost them to potential additional support or resources.

As part of their regular ongoing professional development training, staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues to enable them to keep students safe.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Appendix A summarises key principles in enabling staff to feel confident in responding to students in crisis or distress. It also highlights ways to respond to a student whom one may have concern about.

4.6 Signs of concerns

Mental health problems can have a detrimental impact on the student's studies. Stress and challenges are part of student life at Point Blank. Stress can have a positive impact on motivating a student to achieve their best. However, there may be times when the challenge or stress may become too much for students to cope or overcome. The best way to prevent students who are struggling to cope develop into more serious crisis is to intervene early and be aware of early signs of concern.

At Point Blank, we encourage students to disclose any mental health problem or additional needs they may have as early as possible so we may provide the necessary support during their studies.

There may be cases that students are willing to disclose their problems to a member of staff, however, in some cases, students may find it difficult or unwilling to disclose or ask for necessary support. Therefore, it is important that all staff members are aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to relevant colleagues as soon as is appropriate.

Possible warning signs include but not limited to:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Sudden changes in appearance or mood
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

More detailed steps on how to respond to a student in distress or of concern can be found in Appendix A.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should address this as soon as possible with relevant person. Staff can speak and address their concerns to the Wellbeing team or in case of grave concerns, speak to Music School Manager, David McHugh.

If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. However, it is important to note, that staff should work within their level of competence and feel confident in knowing where to signpost or who to contact if they have concerns about any student.

4.7 Crisis Intervention Support

Through staff training and encouraging a wider school ethos where mental health is recognised and supported can go a long way in increasing awareness and dealing with early signs of concerns.

However, this is not always possible. And at times, students may require more urgent and direct intervention.

Signs for concern may range from mild to severe. A situation would be considered urgent:

- if it is believed a student to be at immediate risk or harm to themselves - this may be because of what they are saying or something they may be doing
- if their actions might cause an immediate risk to someone else
- and in some cases, student experiencing panic attack in class or at college

Guidelines on how to respond to a student experiencing suicidal thoughts or ideation can be found in Appendix D.

4.8 Additional Support

The Wellbeing Team can also help students with disabilities or long-term conditions with matters such as applying for adjustments to learning or applying for Disabled Students' Allowance. All our students have the right to learn without any obstructions, therefore we aim to ensure that the appropriate adjustments are put in place to support you should this be required.

We can provide support for students with:

- Specific learning difficulties e.g dyslexia, ADHD
- Autism spectrum disorders e.g asperger's
- Mobility impairments
- Sensory impairments
- Long term health conditions
- Long term mental health condition

For more information on different types of mental health or additional learning difficulties students may experience at Point Blank, please refer to Appendix C.

4.9 Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality is taken seriously at Point Blank. Any concerns surrounding confidentiality has the dignity and respect of the student at its core. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when confidentiality is limited and information must always be shared with another member of staff, such as, in cases involving severe risk, at a risk of harm to themselves or others.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, or designated person. This helps to safeguard staff's own emotional wellbeing as this takes away the sole responsibility for the student and brings it into a more supportive network. It, also, ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Appendix A – Listening and responding to someone in distress

These guidelines can help staff if a student approaches them for support or if they have concerns a student may be struggling. Here are general steps to consider:

1 Notice the signs

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Motivation
- Focus, concentration, memory
- Isolated in class, hub
- Notice changes in behaviour: withdrawn, aggressive, losing weight, putting on weight, neglecting themselves, falling asleep in class
- Attention-needing behaviours
- plus signs mentioned above

2 Boundary setting and considering the environment/setting

- think of the setting, create some privacy - sit down.
- Are there any distractions? Is it private enough? Will I be able to give my full attention?
- Boundaries – establish time boundaries at the start ('I have 10 mins, how can I help?' or 'I have 30 mins at 4pm, I can offer more time then that way I can give you the time you need without interruption').
- mention confidentiality
- Be upfront about your role and how you can help. This may be a good time to say that we have a counselling service.
- Also be aware when you reached the boundary of your competence. It's ok to say no or refer the student to someone else (if possible).

3 Active Listening

- recognise psychological distress
- communicate honestly and compassionately
- ask using open questions - "Can I ask what you are concerned about?", "I've noticed that you've been absent from class lately, and I've been concerned. How are you doing?" – show that you care and you are interested
- Gather all of the concerns - "Is there something else you'd like to share?" (if you have the time)

- don't judge or label or interpret, remember you are not there to offer solutions to their emotional problems
- Respond empathically - "You have a lot on your mind.", "I really hear how difficult it must feel for you..." - attempt to understand the world of the student by temporarily 'stepping into his or her shoes' – to be with student
- focus on core message – what they are saying
- don't interpret no need for solution – listen, be attentive – once again you are not there to fix. Responding to someone empathically, without judgement and showing you take them seriously can make a world of difference for student.

4 Support

- ask "Who do you have to talk to (peers, family, partner, etc)?" "Who or what support do you have?"
- If so ask, "How do they help?"
- try to get the student to try to come up with their own ideas, resources or solutions - "What do you think would help?"
- At the end you may want to ask - "Is there something you would like me to do?" and let them know that you will be in touch with the answer (if needed or you don't know the answer at the moment).

5 Ending

- Remind the student that you only have a few minutes left - summarize and close - "Can we leave it there?" 'Can I get back to you later?'
- Inform the student there is a counselling service and if they would like to see the counsellor.
- If needs be, remind the student if they are struggling to cope and would like to talk to someone in confidence externally, there are several organisations/helplines they can contact. Offer the Crisis Support and Additional Support sheet.
- Make notes – what happened, next steps – follow up

6 Self-Care

- If you need debrief, ask someone you trust if you can have a quick chat (remember, you can always let the student know that you may need to speak with a trusted colleague about their concerns).
- Take time to take a few deep breaths before returning to your next task. This may mean taking 5/10 mins to step out of the office for some fresh air or making yourself a drink.

Above guidelines or resources may or may not be helpful to every student or situation encountered but may give foundation for staff to feel more confident in responding and being there for students.

Appendix B - Crisis and Additional Sources of Support

If a student is struggling to cope or experience difficulties, staff can encourage the student to explore and express these with the student counsellor. However, if the student feels that they require help urgently, and cannot wait for your next session with their counsellor, or have not been referred to yet, there are external services they can access. **Please note if anyone is in danger and need immediate help please call the emergency services on 999.**

If a student is struggling to cope, feel suicidal or need emotional support and would like to talk to someone in confidence external to the school, here are a number of helplines they can contact:

Samaritans

Tel: 116 123

www.samaritans.org

A registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide often through their telephone helpline. Samaritans offer a free anonymous confidential helpline you can access 24 hours/day, 365 days/year.

Music Mind Matters (Help Musicians UK)

Tel: 0808 802 8002

www.musicmindsmatter.org.uk

Music Mind Matters offers musicians and students emotional support, advice and information and signposting to other specialist services/support. You can talk to trained support staff by ringing the helpline. Helpline is available 24 hours/day.

Papyrus (HopelineUK)

Tel: 0800 068 4141

Text: 07786209697

www.papyrus-uk.org

HOPELINEUK is a specialist telephone service staffed by trained professionals who give non-judgemental support, practical advice and information to children, teenagers and young people up to the age of 35 who are worried about how they are feeling.

Lines are open **10am – 10pm weekdays and 2pm – 10pm weekends and bank holidays**

Sane

Tel: 0300 304 7000

www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/helpline

SANEline is a national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers. The helpline is open **every day of the year from 4.30pm to 10.30pm.**

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Tel: 0800 58 58 58 (London - 0808 802 58 58)

www.thecalmzone.net

CALM works to prevent male suicide and offers support services for any man who is struggling or in crisis. CALM's helpline and web-chat are for men in the UK who need to talk or find information and support. The services are open **5pm–midnight daily** and are free, anonymous and confidential.

Maytree

Tel: 020 7263 7070

www.maytree.org.uk

A registered charity supporting people in suicidal crisis in a non-medical setting, providing one-off stay in a safe and confidential space for people in the midst of a suicidal crisis. The service runs 24 hours/day, 365 days/year.

Alternatively, you can contact:

- Your GP or medical practice
- if GP surgery not open, **call 111** (NHS 111 helpline service - <https://111.nhs.uk/>)

If students would like to find out more about mental health, wellbeing and issues that can affect them during time as a student, the following websites may provide information, advice or additional support:

Mind

Tel: 020 8519 2122

www.mind.org.uk

Provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing mental health problem. MIND also provide information booklets on various mental health issues and related topics.

Help Musicians UK

Tel: 020 7239 9100

www.helpmusicians.org.uk

Help Musicians UK is the leading UK charity for professional musicians of all genres, offering support and advice for musicians starting out through to retirement.

Rethink

www.rethink.org

Provide expert, accredited advice and information to everyone affected by mental health problems.

Student Minds

www.studentminds.org.uk

A student mental health charity, empowering students and members of the university community to look after their own mental health, support others and create change.

Appendix C – Additional needs and Specific Learning Difficulty

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) refer to conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and ADHD/ADD, that affect the way a person learns and processes new information. Specific Learning Difficulties are not related to intelligence and do not determine one's academic ability. The severity of one's condition can vary from mild to severe. The most common SpLDs are defined below:

- **Dyslexia** is thought to be a genetic condition that affects reading, writing and spelling skills. Most people with dyslexia have the condition from birth and it often occurs alongside other conditions. You can find out more on the British Dyslexia Association's website.
- **Dyspraxia** is a developmental disorder which affects coordination. This condition can cause social and organisational difficulties and the specific difficulties that are experienced can change over time. For further information visit the Dyspraxia Foundation website.
- **Dyscalculia refers** to a long-term difficulty in learning and understanding arithmetic, therefore it can be challenging for people with dyscalculia to deal with numbers. This disorder often occurs alongside other developmental disorders such as Dyslexia. More information can be found on the British Dyslexia Association's website.
- **ADHD/ADD** is a behavioural disorder that causes difficulty in concentration and can be characterised by impulsive decisions and hyperactivity. This condition is often found in people with other conditions such as anxiety, depression and autism. To read more about this condition, you can head to the NHS website.

A disability is a long-term condition that affects someone physically or mentally and impairs their ability to carry out everyday activities. Disabilities can affect one's ability to move, see, hear, communicate and learn. It can also impact one's social relationships and their mental health. Examples of common disabilities are outlined below:

- **Autistic Spectrum Disorder** is a term that encompasses a range of conditions that affect a person's social skills, communication and behaviour. An example of these conditions is Asperger's Syndrome. The spectrum refers to how autism affects people in different ways, some people with autism will have similar difficulties, whereas others will differ. People with autism often have other difficulties such as SpLDs and other disabilities. The National Autistic Society provides further information.
- **Mental health issues** refer to common conditions such as anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and stress. Other severe conditions include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and eating disorders. Mental health problems are experienced by 1 in 4 adults in Britain and often people do not declare mental health difficulties as they do not see them as a disability. It is important to note that even if a person feels well, they should still be regarded as having a disability if there is a possibility

that adverse effects could re-occur. Useful information about mental health can be found on Mind's website.

- **A visual impairment** is defined as when a person's vision is limited or reduced and cannot be corrected, for example, by the use of glasses or by surgery. This type of condition often occurs alongside a learning or physical disability and often has a high impact in its occurrences. The diagnosis is based on the severity of condition – sight impaired (“partially sighted”) or severely sight impaired (“blind”). The Scope website provides links and information about visual impairment.
- **Acquired brain injury (ABI)** refers to damage to the brain that has occurred after birth for example from an accident or a health issue such as a tumour or stroke. The effects of ABI can vary depending on the type of injury that has been sustained. The Brain Injury Society provides more detail about head injuries.

Information and resources on different types of mental health problems

- <https://www.nopanic.org.uk/resources/>
- <https://www.studentsagainstdepression.org/are-you-helping-someone-who-is-depressed-or-anxious/>
- <https://www.talktofrank.com/>
- <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>
- <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/lookingafteryourmentalwellbeing.html>
- <https://www.musicmindsmatter.org.uk/>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>

Appendix D – How to respond to student who expresses suicidal thoughts/considers ending own life

- Take student seriously - People who talk about suicide can act on their feelings. It's best to assume that they are telling the truth and take them seriously.
- Don't judge or assume
- Check with student intentions - "It sounds like you're really struggling at the moment. I am concerned what you expressed and need to ask 'are you feeling like you want to end your life?'"
- Explain your concern to the student
- don't skirt around topic – it's often hard to talk about suicide and there is still a taboo regards talking about it. Being upfront about your concerns can make the student feel that their struggle has been taken seriously.
- Try not to leave the student alone
- Make sure you and student in safe place – try not to act alone
- Stay calm as you can

If the student says they haven't made plans and don't intend to act on their suicidal thoughts, but are feeling deeply distressed:

- refer to counselling service
- offer crisis support helpline contact info
- encourage them to contact GP
- contact wellbeing team – wellbeing@pointblankmusicschool.com

If the student has actively made plans, or you have grave concern that they take their own life, **you must take action:**

- call 999 – if immediate danger
- contact helplines (Samaritans) with student
- contact line manager – let someone know immediately

For more info, check out: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/supporting-someone-who-feels-suicidal/about-suicidal-feelings/?o=10307#.W83WY2hKIM9>