



## **Mental Health Policy**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Across the Higher Education Sector, institutions are seeing an increase in both the prevalence and severity of mental health difficulties that students present with. Mental health difficulties can be triggered by many factors. Stress, life events, past experiences and genetics all play a part in determining mental health. Student life exposes individuals to risk factors affecting mental health including debt, periods of transition, drug use, alcohol use, culture shock, and disconnection from previous supports.

Rushmore Business School (RBS) has the responsibilities to ensure a safe, inclusive and friendly atmosphere prevails for students, staff and visitors.

#### **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the commitment to mental health support for students and staff and to outline the actions that RBS will take to respond to concerns.

#### **2. OBJECTIVES**

- To develop a co-ordinated strategy for the promotion of the mental health of all students including suicide prevention initiatives
- To provide a co-ordinated approach to the management of students' mental health difficulties and to deliver effective management of cases where there is an emergency and/or serious risk of harm or suicide
- To provide effective and accessible support to students making reasonable adjustments as necessary
- To engage with external partners such as Health Providers, NGO's to promote and improve access for students to community and specialist resources
- To ensure effective operation of relevant enabling policies for students with mental health problems including Equality and Diversity, Admissions, Mitigating Circumstances, and Temporary Suspension of Studies.

### **Definition of Mental Health**

Mental health encompasses the emotional resilience that enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness, and an underlying belief in our own, and others' dignity and worth. It also allows us to engage productively in and contribute to society or our community.

A positive sense of mental wellbeing is for all of us to consider all of the time, as we might consider our physical, social and spiritual wellbeing. It is quite possible to have a good sense of mental wellbeing and yet be living with a diagnosed mental illness. Mental health difficulties, often following major life events such as the end of a relationship, close bereavement or leaving home, can impact significantly on how students feel about themselves and how they engage with the transitions of student life.

Symptoms may beset anyone at any time, giving rise to ongoing conditions that could interfere with the student's university experience and have implications for academic study. Mental illness – arising from organic, genetic, psychological or behavioural factors (or combinations of these) that occur in an individual and are not understood or expected as part of normal development or culture – can be acute or chronic and may fall within the definition of a 'disability' contained in the Equality Act 2010 in UK.

## **PROCEDURES**

The Academic Director along with the Head of Student Support has the lead role in handling and co-ordinating the management of student mental health.

Whilst RBS staff do have a key role in responding to the needs of students with mental health problems, Rushmore recognises that external agencies like NGOs are more suitable to help out with these cases.

However, it is important that staff are aware that the need to maintain confidentiality is required at all times.

### **- Recognising Mental Health problems**

There may be multiple potential signs and symptoms that might indicate that a student has a mental health difficulty. These will vary by individual. Some signs to look out for include:

- changes in behaviour, such as becoming more withdrawn, aggressive or volatile
- physical signs such as cuts to wrists or a lack of energy
- changes in patterns of attendance
- Changes in academic performance

Depression and anxiety are the most common form of mental health problems. Depression most commonly presents as a lowering of mood with poor concentration, failing grades, loss of outside interests and withdrawal from academic and social activity. It is sometimes accompanied by a risk of suicide and self harm. People who have become depressed may not recognise what is happening and only seek help when prompted by others. Depression can be treated by psychological therapies and/ or medication Anxiety is a feeling of unease. Everybody experiences it when faced with a stressful situation, for example before an exam or an interview, or during a worrying time such as illness.

## **- Recognising student mental health difficulties**

Possible indicators of student mental health difficulty:

- Everyone's experience of a mental health difficulty will be unique and different. Therefore, the signs and indicators for someone experiencing a mental health difficulty will vary between individuals.
- The indicators below do not directly mean that the student has a mental health difficulty. The indicators should only be used as a trigger to start a dialogue with the student about what they consider the problem to be. This will allow staff to offer support to the student where appropriate.
- Any of the indicators below can affect anyone at some time in their life. However, if a student is experiencing a number of these indicators over a period of time or there is an increase in their severity, it may be appropriate to offer support. Some general signs to look out for could include:

### **- Behaviour Changes:**

- Withdrawal
- Changes in attendance
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Acting out of character
- Incongruent responses to situations
- Cognitive Changes
- Lack of concentration
- Mood swings
- Loss of Confidence
- Irritability
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Physical Changes
- Panic attacks
- Noticeable weight gain/loss
- Low energy
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Sleep disturbances

### **- Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Academic Director is responsible for reviewing and monitoring action taken under this policy and will provide a report to the RBS Academic Committee on an annual basis.