



Student Mental Health Policy 2024

1. Context

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin (hereafter Trinity/the university) is committed to supporting the mental health of all Trinity students.

Trinity recognises that wellbeing, mental health, mental health difficulties and mental illness are on a continuum and are not distinct points. This policy applies to the whole of this continuum and acknowledges the inevitable flux within student lives, e.g., the varying demands of an academic year cycle, external life events and the complex multi-faceted forces shaping the mental health landscape that Trinity students navigate.

This policy sits within the context of student mental health being the responsibility of all members of the university community.

It is intended to review and update this policy on a regular basis.

1.a Legislative Context

There are several Acts relevant to mental health, including:

- Mental Health Act 2001
- Equal Status Act 2000 – 2015
- Disability Act 2005 – 2018
- Employment Equality Act 1998-2011
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (Section 42, Public Bodies)

Student Services staff (including doctors, psychotherapists, psychologists, the College psychiatrist, disability officers, occupational therapists, social workers) are bound by their respective professional codes of ethics.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, it is important to define the following terms (while also accepting that alternative definitions may be more appropriate, helpful or accurate on other occasions):

Mental Health

The term 'mental health' refers to how a person thinks, feels and acts when faced with life's situations. It describes a sense of wellbeing, and it implies the capacity to live in a resourceful and fulfilling manner; having the resilience to deal with the challenges and obstacles that life and studying present.



Mental Health Difficulties

Mental health difficulties are problems that affect a person's thoughts, physical sensations, feelings, behaviour and ability to function. A student experiencing mental health difficulties that interfere with their capacity to function, or which are persistent, may benefit from accessing one of the available support services. If severe, mental health difficulties may signal the onset of mental illness.

Mental Illness

Mental illness is the term used to refer to severe mental health difficulties. Mental illness includes conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety/panic disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders and eating disorders. Students who experience mental illness will require treatment and support from a health professional such as a Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist or General Practitioner.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Support the Trinity community to be proactive in the area of student mental health and responsive to the mental health needs of its students, recognising the university's duty of care - in particular for those students who are experiencing mental health difficulties or mental illness.
- Outline Trinity's whole-campus approach to mental health and mental wellbeing.
- Outline the roles and opportunities for members of the university to:
 - contribute to the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing in Trinity,
 - respond to instances of mental health difficulties and mental illness, appropriately, and within their competencies.
- Outline best practice in responding to student mental health needs, while also recognising the limitations of what may be possible. Trinity provides primary and limited secondary care, but is not a tertiary care provider.
- This policy assists Trinity in fulfilling its caring, educational and legal responsibilities to students, including the responsibility to reasonably accommodate students who disclose a mental health disability as outlined in Trinity's Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

4. Benefits

By articulating a written policy, Trinity aims to promote student wellbeing and provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment for all students.

5. Scope

This policy applies to all Trinity students, including undergraduates, postgraduates, and visiting students (while registered at Trinity). It also applies to all academic and professional staff interacting with students, including (but not limited, to) the Student Counselling Services,



College Health Centre, Trinity disAbility Service, Tutors, College Security, the Junior Dean and the Postgraduate Advisory Service.

6. Principles

The university is committed to an inclusive education for all, which welcomes diversity and promotes equal opportunities for students to develop to their full potential in a supportive environment.

While the primary purpose of the university is as an educational and research community, it is recognised that student mental health is of central importance to academic success and personal development. The university aims to create a safe and supportive environment based on multicultural, multi-disciplinary and multi-theoretical values and practices that allow a diverse student body to access care, to receive high quality services, and to take positive pathways to mental health.

Promoting positive attitudes to student mental health is the responsibility of the whole Trinity community (including students) and should be embedded in institutional decision making. Systems and structures within the university should be designed with student mental health at the core.

Trinity recognises the importance of a compassionate response in instances where a student encounters a mental health difficulty which may impede on their academic progression or engagement with their course.

In responding to mental health difficulties or mental illness, consideration should always be given to the impact of a student's life context (including gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, membership of the Traveller community, culture etc.). The university endeavours to support and promote the good mental health of all students in a way that is respectful and considerate of diversity. This includes specific interventions to address the needs of minority groups.

Medical, therapeutic, and psychological supports provided by Trinity are normally supplemental to those provided by the Health Services Executive and other providers, and are not intended as a replacement for these.

7. Policy

In line with the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (HEA, 2020), Trinity aims to encourage a whole-campus approach to promoting and supporting good mental health, with shared responsibility between the university, its staff, the student body, and individual students (and where appropriate, students' families and wider networks) with respect to mental health.



Trinity aims to support its students in developing the skills and supports to maintain a baseline of good mental health. In the furtherance of these aims, Trinity supports positive mental health among the whole student population across four categories of activity outlined below.

7.1 Awareness raising, including:

- Increasing understanding across the Trinity community about the centrality of good mental health to the student experience, and the importance of respecting the rights and dignity of each individual student and of the student body as a whole e.g. Mental Health Week, Health and Sport Week and other awareness-raising campaigns, events, and initiatives.
- Providing all students with adequate information on how to access supports. This includes providing information to students in pre-arrival materials, during orientation, and throughout their course of studies.
- Promoting informed and constructive attitudes to mental health difficulties through training and outreach activities, reducing stigma so that students in difficulty are encouraged to seek help and staff are confident in their role-appropriate responses.

7.2 Preventative activity and proactive supports to provide a supportive environment, including:

- Facilitating students in engaging with programmes that scaffold and promote good mental health, such as drop-in support groups, workshops, training, guided online supports and psychoeducational groups.
- Promoting the Student Support Services at Orientation/Induction and throughout the academic year to students and staff.
- Embedding mental health within the Healthy Trinity initiative, facilitating incorporation of mental health into a holistic concept of health and wellbeing.
- Providing guidance to any member of staff who becomes concerned about the mental health of a student (for example, via the daily duty counsellor, College Health doctor on duty, etc.).
- Where appropriate, providing and promoting training to embed mental health literacy in the university community and ensure university staff are aware of emergency procedures, the support services available and how to make appropriate referrals and interventions for students in distress.



- Facilitating and supporting student-led/peer support interventions such as Student2Student's peer mentoring and peer support programmes, appropriate support to the Students Union and other student-led bodies, and continuing our long-standing supervision and support arrangement with Niteline, in collaboration with other higher education institutions.

7.3 Responding to disclosed or suspected mental health difficulties by:

- Following international best practice guidelines around student mental health, including the provision of proactive, appropriate and timely supports for students. These supports include individual therapies and consultations, wellbeing and therapy groups, online supports, cross-service collaboration and appropriate external referrals. Service models will often include actively managed waitlists for specific supports.
- Respecting the right to confidentiality of all students; all information disclosed by students relating to a person's mental health should be treated as confidential, within specified limits required under law and by professional bodies, such as risk of harm to self or others, or when child abuse is disclosed.
- Being responsive to acute mental health crises, providing on-the-day emergency support during University business hours, and providing guidelines and support to relevant staff responding to mental health crises and critical incidents reported outside of business hours.
- Providing needs assessments and appropriate reasonable accommodations to support the teaching, learning and assessment of students registered with the Trinity disAbility Service on the basis of mental illness as outlined in the Trinity Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- Recognising that evidenced mental health difficulties may constitute grounds for academic accommodations. This includes, where feasible and academically appropriate: extensions on coursework deadlines, deferrals of assessments, academic appeals, repetition of a year, and off-books requests.
- Providing for a Fitness to Study Policy and related procedures to respond to and adequately manage concerns relating to a student's current capacity to attend their course of study and participate in campus life, which may include concerns related to a student's mental health.



- Providing a Fitness to Practice Policy in the relevant disciplines to respond to and adequately manage concerns relating to a student's current capacity to attend clinical and other professional elements of study.

7.4 Providing treatment and referral by:

- Providing appropriate intervention where needed. Encouraging students to disclose pre-existing mental health difficulties, including mental illness and details of prescribed medications, in as timely a manner as possible so that the best possible supports can be put in place.
- Providing (often multi-disciplinary) intervention to students with chronic and enduring mental health difficulties, subject to need and resources.
- Where necessary, facilitating referral beyond Trinity support services, such as to hospital emergency departments, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and relevant private or low-cost services. Primary responsibility for the treatment of mental health difficulties and mental illness lies with the HSE.

8. Responsibility and Implementation

This policy falls under the remit of the Dean of Students.

9. Related Documents

Given the fact that mental health is an intrinsic component of everyone's life, the promotion of positive mental health and mental wellbeing and the response to instances of mental health difficulties and mental illness cuts across several policies and procedures in Trinity. The following are of particular relevance:

- Alcohol Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/CollegeAlcoholPolicy.pdf>
- Child Protection Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/about/policies/university-policies/child-protection-policy/>
- Trinity Child Safeguarding Statement
<https://www.tcd.ie/about/policies/university-policies/child-protection-policy/>
- Data Protection Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Data-Protection-Policy-16122020.pdf>
- Dignity and Respect Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/hr/dignity-and-respect.pdf>
- Equality Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/EqualityPolicyRevised2016.pdf>
- Fitness to Practice Policy



- <https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Fitness-to-Practise-Policy.pdf>
- Student Capacity Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/student-capacity-policy.pdf>
- Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy
https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Gender_Identity_Gender_Expressio_n_Policy_2019.pdf
- Misuse of Drugs Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Misuse-of-Drugs-Policy.pdf>
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Occupational-Health-Safety-policy.pdf>
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/academic/Reasonable-Accommodations-Policy_April-2023.pdf
- Student Partnership Agreement
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/academic/student-partnership-agreement.pdf>
- Sustainability Strategy
<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/sustainability-policy.pdf>

Trinity also operates within the following frameworks and charters:

HEA National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework

<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2020/10/HEA-NSMHS-Framework.pdf>

Healthy Campus Framework and Charter 2020-2025

<https://hea.ie/policy/health-and-wellbeing-landing-page/healthy-campus-landing-page/healthy-campus-charter-and-framework/>

HSE Sharing the Vision, Ireland's National Mental Health Policy

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/publications/sharing-the-vision-a-mental-health-policy-for-everyone/>

WHO Guidance on Community Mental Health Services:

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025707>

Document/version Control for New Policies

Approved by: Board

Date policy approved: 24 October 2007

Date of next review: 2029/30

Officer responsible for review: Dean of Students



Document Control for Revised Policies

- 10.1 Date of initial approval: 24 October 2007
- 10.2 Date revised policy approved: 4 December 2024
- 10.3 Date policy effective from: 4 December 2024
- 10.4 Date of next review: Academic Year 2029/30