

## **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

### **Introduction from the School's Director, Dr Jon Wardle**

At the NFTS, we are proud of our reputation as the leading Film and Television School in the UK and one of the world's pre-eminent institutions in film and the moving image, and of the success enjoyed by our graduates. We welcome students from countries all around the world, and cultivate a vibrant, diverse learning community. However, we recognise that there can be times when some students struggle with the demands of studying or life in general.

Nationally and globally there is increasing concern about mental health challenges facing young people as a result of the growing pressures they face living, studying and working in today's world. It is our priority at the NFTS to promote good physical and mental health, and to support students and staff who need help.

We are committed to a proactive and inclusive approach to mental health, and recognise that support needs to be available to students from a variety of sources in order to best meet their needs. Here at the School, all students receive academic and pastoral support from their Head of Department with more specialist support being offered by our Student Support and Wellbeing advisers. We work in partnership with our Student Reps to encourage student engagement in a range of sporting and social activities and events, proven to help maintain good mental wellbeing.

This strategy sets out our commitment to take an institution-wide approach to mental health to ensure the best possible experience for our students, and to prepare them for the challenges of the workplace.

## Aims

- Foster a School community that is committed to supporting student and staff mental health, and to communicating well about mental health
- Promote healthy behaviour and positive mental health within the curriculum and co-curricular activities, and in the use of the School site
- Facilitate the early identification of students who need support
- Deliver effective student support services that meet the needs of students and are resources sufficiently to meet demand
- Provide training and support for staff relating to mental wellbeing
- Use data to support mental health and wellbeing, identifying and monitoring trends and devising improvement plans when required

## Our Strategy

This Strategy has been developed in partnership with staff and the Student Union to provide a framework enabling the School to support mental health and wellbeing. It references the Strategic Themes proposed by UUK's #StepChange framework for mental health in higher education.

We will measure the impact of these strategies through a range of data sources, and will use this data and feedback from students and staff to produce regular reports to inform School planning.

### Leadership

Mental health and wellbeing will be a strategic priority for the School - we will foster a community that is committed to supporting student and staff mental health, and to communicating well about mental health.

#### What we are doing now:

- The Student Experience Group, led by the Registrar and reporting to the Academic Standards Committee, is leading the School approach to mental health and wellbeing.

#### What we will do next:

- The Academic Standards Committee will provide formal governance oversight of this Strategy.

- The Student Support and Wellbeing team will continue to support the implementation of this Strategy working with the Student Union and interested students to ensure student feedback is taken into account.
- We will foster a supportive environment that encourages early disclosure and ensures students know how to access appropriate support services.
- We will work towards signing the 'Time to Change' pledge.
- We will monitor the development of the University Mental Health Charter, and aim to benchmark our practices against it.

## Prevention

We will promote health behaviour and positive mental health within the curriculum and co-curricular activities, and in the use of the School site.

### What we are doing now:

- The Student Support and Wellbeing advisers offer advice and support to students on a wide range of issues and refer students to external agencies when necessary.
- All students are introduced to the support available at the School through information provided to them during Springboard, in the Student Information Handbook and through whole cohort meetings with the Student Support and Wellbeing advisers.
- We encourage students to declare pre-existing mental health disabilities prior to registration at the School.
- We run a Mental Wellbeing Week annually to encourage participation in events and activities that support good mental health.
- In partnership with the Student Union we encourage participation in sport and physical activity.
- We run a weekly on-site yoga class in term time and short mindfulness sessions from time to time.
- We offer financial advice to students, and endeavour to support those in financial hardship to complete their courses
- Students are given multiple opportunities throughout the year to disclose a pre-existing or emerging mental health condition.

### What we will do next:

- We will work with the Student Union to develop and promote wellbeing initiatives that address issues relating to wellbeing such as healthy eating, sleep, drugs and alcohol, and work/life balance.

- We will continue to support initiatives to increase physical activity levels.
- Curriculum reviews will take into account workload with a view to avoiding over-assessment and excessive workloads.

## Early intervention

We will facilitate the early identification of students who need support.

### What we are doing now:

- We are delivering training to staff across the School about mental health
- We are raising the profile of Student Support and Wellbeing to encourage staff to come forward and discuss concerns they may have about students.

### What we will do next:

- We will work towards signing the 'Time to Change' pledge.
- We will continue to train staff in the early identification of students with mental health issues.
- We will review the information made available to applicants on our website to help create a supportive environment where students feel confident to disclose a mental health disability and to seek help and support before issues escalate.
- We will run a termly event highlighting the importance of good mental health and reminding students where they can go for help and support.
- We will work to remove any perceived barriers to, or stigma associated with, seeking help for mental health or emotional difficulties

## Support

We will deliver effective student support services that meet the needs of students and are resources sufficiently to meet demand.

### What we are doing now:

- The Student Support and Wellbeing advisers offer advice and support to students on a wide range of issues and refer students to external agencies when necessary.
- Information about supporting students in distress and out of hours' support, including through Nightline and Big White Wall, is available on the Staff and Student Support and Wellbeing Workplace pages.
- Students receive pastoral support within their departments through their Head of Department and tutors.

- The Student Union encourage students to disclose confidentially issues of concern.
- We offer financial advice to students, and endeavour to support those in financial hardship to complete their courses.
- We provide training to staff on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence.

**What we will do next:**

- We will continue to review the range of partners and specialist services we work with to meet the needs of students.
- We will review the resourcing of the Student Support and Wellbeing team to ensure that it can adequately meet student demand, and to ensure that they are trained appropriately to deal with the issues that students present with.
- We will review and enhance relevant policies and procedures, including Fitness to Study and Extenuating Circumstances, to ensure they support this Strategy.
- We will run a 'Never OK' campaign to encourage students to report all incidents of sexual harassment and to emphasise that bullying or harassment of any sort is not tolerated at the School.
- We will continue to develop our links with the Film and TV Charity, and signpost our graduates to the support they offer to the film and TV industry.

**Staff**

We will provide training and support for staff relating to mental wellbeing.

**What we are doing now:**

- We are delivering training to staff across the School about mental health and responding to distressed students

**What we will do next:**

- We will continue to offer training to staff appropriate to their role about how to identify and respond to students with mental health and wellbeing issues, including those with suicidal thoughts.
- We will review the specialist training offered to staff to ensure that they feel confident in dealing with students facing, for example, identity-based issues or who are survivors of sexual violence.
- We will continue to develop the range of information and resources available to staff through Workplace.
- We will run a workshop to ensure that staff feel confident in responding appropriately to a serious incident on or off site related to student mental health.

## Data

We will use data to support mental health and wellbeing, identifying and monitoring trends and devising improvement plans when required.

### **What we are doing now:**

- We ask all students to give feedback on their experiences of student support at the School, and develop actions to respond where required.
- We monitor the number of disclosures by students of mental health disabilities to identify trends.
- We seek feedback from external agencies about the issues that our students present with to help inform action planning.

### **What we will do next:**

- We will continue to monitor the number of disclosures by students of mental health disabilities to help identify areas where more staff training or resources are required.
- We will analyse data relating to mental health disclosures to ensure that groups of students sharing particular characteristics, for example male students, are not underrepresented.