

# AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY MENTAL HEALTH FRAMEWORK

## SUMMARY

### THE FRAMEWORK

The Australian University Mental Health Framework (the framework) provides guidance for mentally healthy university settings that support students to thrive educationally and personally. The framework also includes guidance for the mental health sector to strengthen its engagement with universities to support student mental health and wellbeing.

**“ We recognise that mental health and wellbeing is both the challenge and opportunity of our time, and we want to make a positive contribution.”**

UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT

Good mental health is a personal and community asset that needs to be promoted and protected. It is linked to greater productivity, better physical health and increased life expectancy.(1) By contrast, mental ill-health causes distress, can contribute to unemployment, psychosocial disability and reduced life expectancy without appropriate supports.(2) Successful participation in university education can act as a protective factor for mental health and can support recovery from an experience of mental ill-health.(3)

### VISION

Mentally healthy universities supporting student mental health and wellbeing in collaboration with the mental health sector.

### PRINCIPLES

The framework is structured around six principles that support student mental health and wellbeing.



**1.** The student experience is enhanced through mental health and wellbeing approaches that are informed by students’ needs, perspectives and the reality of their experiences.



**2.** All members of the university community contribute to learning environments that enhance student mental health and wellbeing.



**3.** Mentally healthy university communities encourage participation; foster a diverse, inclusive environment; promote connectedness; and support academic and personal achievement.



**4.** The response to mental health and wellbeing is strengthened through collaboration and coordinated actions.



**5.** Students are able to access appropriate, effective, timely services and supports to meet their mental health and wellbeing needs.



**6.** Continuous improvement and innovation is informed by evidence and helps build an understanding of what works for student mental health and wellbeing.

The framework provides guidance for each principle to illustrate what it might look like in practice. Practices are focused on supporting student mental health and wellbeing whether delivered by a university or mental health sector organisation.

## TAKING ACTION

With an overarching focus on coordinated action and continuous improvement and innovation, the framework is dynamic and adaptive, rather than static. There are multiple entry points and the framework is adaptable to individual contexts, enabling institutions to meet the unique needs of their student population while supporting ongoing cross-sector collaboration, improvement and innovation through a coordinated national approach.

### Australian universities are asked to commit to:

- the guiding principles underpinning the framework;
- developing a settings-based strategy, co-designed with students, to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the whole university community;
- keeping university communities informed on actions taken and progress made to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students.

### The mental health sector is asked to commit to:

- planning and local governance arrangements that include provisions for meeting the needs of the university student population;
- strengthening connections with the university sector and valuing the role of educational participation to support students' mental health and wellbeing;
- collaborating with university students to inform appropriate provision of supports and to improve student engagement with services and supports.

## ACCESS THE FRAMEWORK

[University Mental Health Framework.](#)

[University Mental Health Framework full report.](#)

[University Mental Health Framework case studies.](#)



**“Enhancing students’ mental health and wellbeing helps them to achieve their potential at university and in life.”**

UNIVERSITY STUDENT

## REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice: a report of the World Health Organization, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse in collaboration with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the University of Melbourne. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2005.
2. Firth J, Siddiqi N, Koyanagi A, Siskind D, Rosenbaum S, Galletly C, et al. The Lancet Psychiatry Commission: a blueprint for protecting physical health in people with mental illness. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2019;6(8):675-712.
3. Orygen Youth Research Centre. Tell them they're dreaming: work, education and young people with mental illness in Australia. Melbourne: Orygen Youth Research Centre; 2014.

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