

STUDENT SUPPORT STRATEGY

2024-2028

Norwich University of the Arts
Student Support Strategy 2024-2028

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UNIVERSITY
OF THE ARTS

Introduction

We will build a visible student support service that is integrated across the University and proactively engages with the student community to improve their health and wellbeing, from the moment they consider joining us and throughout their time here. By doing so, we aim to:

- Build a strong community that fosters friendships and a sense of belonging.
- Increase students' preparedness and awareness of resources for managing their health and wellbeing.
- Address accessibility issues early on.
- Provide tailored support for international students to help them integrate into the University and local community.
- Build students' confidence and resilience, supporting their academic and personal growth.

This strategy aims to reduce acute welfare cases by improving overall mental health and wellbeing. Enhancing Student Support services will support the University's ambition for growth and through using our existing data, we will ensure that we can identify students at risk so we can proactively intervene to provide support. Our strategy and operational plan revolve around three main themes:

- Improving Wellbeing
- Intervention
- Integration

These themes align with other University strategies, such as the Creative Learning Strategy, ensuring a cohesive approach to student support.

Defining the Journey

Student Support at Norwich University of the Arts has a strong track record of providing reactive and effective support for students who seek help or are referred to the service. Our new strategy shifts to a proactive model, aiming to anticipate and mitigate issues before they arise. This anticipatory approach is crucial given the significant increase in students presenting with poor mental health and wellbeing - a 176% increase in student support appointments over five years. Our strategy is data-informed and aligns with the University's growth plans, focusing on both domestic and international student needs.

Theme One: Improving Wellbeing

AIM

We aim to maximize student engagement and wellbeing, preventing the causes of poor mental health by fostering a sense of belonging, providing a range of wellbeing interventions alongside traditional therapies, embedding wellbeing in the curriculum, and targeting support for different social groups.

DELIVERABLES

1. Belonging

- Launch initiatives to build confidence and resilience before arrival.
- Encourage community building and early friendships.
- Coordinate events and resources with academic and student bodies to enhance the sense of community.
- Address gaps in belonging among different demographic groups through targeted initiatives.

2. Social Prescribing

- Increase non-medical therapeutic activities in collaboration with city partners, enhancing belonging and wellbeing.

3. Wellbeing in the Curriculum

- Embed wellbeing content in the curriculum, tailored to the challenges of different disciplines.

4. Study Skills

- Expand study skills provision, integrating it into the curriculum to improve academic performance and wellbeing.

5. Student Campaigns

- Support student-led preventative campaigns on significant wellbeing issues, with a focus on areas identified by student surveys.

6. Accommodation

- Ensure safe and secure living environments, integrating accommodation management with student welfare support.

7. Supporting Free Speech and Debate

- Foster an environment of healthy academic debate and free speech, equipping students and staff to handle contentious topics constructively.

8. Removing Barriers to Engagement

- Support students in overcoming academic, social, and practical challenges, particularly those exacerbated by external pressures like the cost-of-living crisis.

Theme Two: **Intervention**

AIM

To identify students in need of support and intervene proactively, preventing issues from escalating, through the coordinated use of data available from a range of sources.

DELIVERABLES

1. Learning Analytics

- Develop a student engagement policy using learning analytics to monitor student engagement and provide targeted support interventions.
- Empower students by giving them access to their data and involving them in their learning journey.
- Combine data from various sources and run discipline-specific analysis to ensure accurate, nuanced engagement assessments.

2. Case Management

- Implement a Case Management System (CMS) to identify and support students in need, integrating support across teams.
- Monitor and analyse case data to identify patterns and provide targeted support.

3. Integrated Systems

- Integrate learning analytics with the CMS to automate and streamline support interventions.
- Use data to evaluate and adjust service delivery for continuous improvement.

Theme Three: Integration – A Shared Responsibility

AIM

Adopt a whole-university approach to student support, ensuring all staff are aligned and equipped to contribute to the strategic mission. We believe that supporting students is everybody's business!

DELIVERABLES

1. Staff Training

- Provide robust training for all staff to confidently support and signpost students in need.
- Create a culture of continuous learning and improvement in Student Support via CPD opportunities.

2. Anticipatory Approach

- Embed anticipatory practices in program design and delivery that move away from a deficit model of support and towards a social one by focusing on inclusive practice and accessibility.
- Develop and implement an ambitious disability policy aligned with the Disabled Students' Commission.

3. Accessibility

- Implement recommendations from an external accessibility audit to improve campus access.
- Move to a more accessible building and offer hybrid service delivery.
- Co-locate student-facing services for easier access and better integration.

4. Reasonable Adjustments

- Streamline the process of identifying, disseminating, and implementing reasonable adjustments for students.
- Consider a new digital platform for managing reasonable adjustments to improve data security and service delivery.

5. Championing Diversity

- Foster an environment that supports diverse student groups, anticipates their needs and provides a platform for them to organise action.
- Work with the Students' Union and Human Resources to support and elevate interest groups.

6. Effective Communication

- Use regular communications to inform the University community about Student Support initiatives and progress.
- Ensure supportive, compassionate and trauma-informed communication with students, considering their diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Enhance the Student Support section of the website to provide clear information and access to services.

