

# Effective practice in International Student mental health

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# Who is English Australia?



Peak body association in the  
ELICOS sector

[www.englishaustralia.com.au](http://www.englishaustralia.com.au)

# Presentation Overview

- ‘Guide to Best Practice in International Student Mental Health’: background
- Common issues in ELICOS student mental health
- Challenges in providing student mental health support
- Key features of effective practice

# Guide to Best Practice in International Student Mental Health

**GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICE**  
IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
MENTAL HEALTH  
2018

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# Guide sponsors

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# Mental Health survey

53% ELICOS centres report increase in incidence of mental health issues.



33% centres assisting students with mental health difficulties on a weekly basis and 24% on a monthly basis.



# How big is the issue?

**Number of ELICOS students 2017 = 177,697**

If we extrapolate – these figure could indicate that:

- over 7,000 ELICOS students with significant depression or anxiety at any one time,
- over 40,000 experiencing depression or anxiety in a 12 month period.

(Extrapolation from: Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10))

# Mental Health survey

In the past 2 years, which mental health issues have students at your institution experienced?

Anxiety	89%	Feelings of extreme highs & lows	37%
Depression	81%	Substance abuse	30%
Extreme worry	73%	Self-harm or risk of self-harm	29%
Grief-related stress	68%	Debilitating acculturative stress	25%
Social withdrawal	52%	Eating disorders	25%
Panic attacks	52%	Drastic change in behaviour	21%
Suicidal thoughts	39%	Psychosis	18%
Internet/gaming addiction	38%	Post-traumatic stress	15%
Domestic violence	38%	Paranoia	13%

# Challenges for education providers



What are the **main challenges** your institution faces in providing support to students experiencing mental health difficulties?

# Top challenges for ELICOS centres



- Stigma & students not seeking help
- Lack of staff expertise & training
- Non-disclosure of issues before arrival
- High demand for counselling & limited human resources
- Language barriers
- Clarification around confidentiality
- Identifying students early

# Essential elements of effective practice

- Provision of MH services in a timely way
- Promotion of MH services via range of channels
- Written mental health policy
- Training for *all staff*
- Support for staff and other students impacted by MH issues
- Healthy lifestyle and MH awareness promotion
- Approaches to aid early identification of MH issues
- System of reasonable adjustments to study requirements
- Sound communication and record keeping processes - confidentiality

(Derived from Reavley et al. 2011)

# Breaking down barriers



3 areas of focus today:

- Raise awareness
- Support and train our frontline staff
- Re-assess confidentiality and pre-disclosure issues

# Promoting mental health awareness

**RUOK?**<sup>TM</sup>



- Across range of media and study periods
- Consider embedding in curriculum
- Consider peer-led initiatives

# Promoting mental health awareness



- Macquarie University English Language Centre Mental Health **workshops – student designed and led**
- Deakin University English Language Institute – **Leadership and Internship Program**  
**Leaders peer-led initiative**

# Promoting mental health awareness



- Curtin LIFE course at Curtin English
- For all news students
- Includes mental health and well-being outcomes

E.g. 'Students can understand the terms *depression* and *anxiety* and identify signs of these in themselves and their peers.'

# Training for all staff

*Clear reporting lines are important. If I knew these, I would feel so much more confident when faced with a student with mental health issues.*

*I would like to know more about how to deal with critical cases, in that first meeting when I often feel overwhelmed myself.*

*I don't know exactly how much I should be doing to help students with mental health issues. Where should I draw the line?*

# Training for all staff



- Info. to help staff identify issues
- Training in mental health protocols—  
knowing what to do & limits
- Training in having difficult  
conversations & identifying illness
- E.g. Mental Health First Aid  
or ‘Accidental Counsellor’

# Assisting Students in Distress

## High Level Distress

### At Risk

A student threatens to harm themselves or others

### At Risk to Self

Let the student know:  
you are concerned about them;  
their safety is your priority;  
as part of your responsibility you will need to  
contact professionals who can assist them.

#### Within Business Hours:

Counselling Support **8313 5663**

#### Outside of Business Hours:

Mental Health Telephone Triage Service  
**13 14 65**

### At Risk to Others

Calm the situation eg. use non-threatening  
body language, listen to their concerns, let  
them know you want to help.  
Advise others to leave the area.  
Contact the **Police 000**  
Then **Security Services 8313 5444**

### After the Event

Keep a record.  
Notify your manager  
(who may need to notify Legal & Risk).  
Notify Manager of Counselling Support  
**8313 5663**  
If injury occurred, notify OHS Officer.  
Debrief with supervisor or Employee Assistance  
Program: **8352 9898** AH **0418 883 855**

### Not at Risk

A high level of distress, but not at  
risk of causing harm.

### You May

Let them know you are  
concerned.  
Refer them to the Counselling  
Service.  
Involve others e.g. ask student 'Is  
there someone we can contact?'

### Early Intervention Group

Inappropriate, concerning or  
intimidating behaviour can be  
referred to this group  
**8313 3191** [eig@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:eig@adelaide.edu.au)

## How to Talk to an Upset Person

1. Stop
2. Listen
3. Summarise emotion: "I can see you are really upset"
4. Summarise practical concern
5. Action

### Counselling Support

Ground Floor, Horace Lamb Building **8313 5663**  
[counsellingcentre@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:counsellingcentre@adelaide.edu.au)

## Low Level Distress

### Emotional Issues (low level)

### You may

Refer them to the counselling service

### Counselling Support **8313 5663**

**Student** can make an appointment  
by walking in, phoning the service  
direct or filling in the online self-  
referral form on counselling support  
website.

**Staff** can phone & accompany a  
student to counselling if they are  
distressed.

**Staff** can request a duty  
counsellor to see the student  
immediately or attend the situation

### Practical Issues

**Aboriginal & Torres Strait  
Islander Education & Support**  
**8313 3623**

**Accommodation Service**  
**8313 5220**

**Advocacy, Appeals, Financial**  
**EWO 8313 5430**

**Disability Support**  
**8313 5962**

**International Student issues**  
**8313 4828**

**Medical**  
**University Health 8313 5050**

**Writing Centre 8313 0280**  
**Maths Learning Centre**  
**8313 5862**

# Early identification and intervention



- Consider how enrolment forms give students opportunity to pre-disclose existing mental health issues
- Ensure students and staff are aware of confidentiality policy

# Early identification and intervention

Do you have a medical condition that may require additional equipment or support?

*versus*

Do you have a learning difficulty or health condition that may impact on the way you study, attend class or sit assessment?

Telling us about your disability will not prejudice your application. The earlier you tell us, the better we are able to work with UNSW and others to assist you to make adjustments to your teaching and assessment program. If you choose not to tell us, we may not be able to make adjustments in time and this could affect your ability to progress in your UNSW Global program ...

If you disclose a disability to us, please indicate that you consent to our use of this information only for the purposes above by ticking this box.



# Where to from here?



1. What training in the area of mental health would you find useful?
2. Does your institution have any effective practices for supporting students' mental health?

# References

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