# Teaching and curriculum design to support mental wellbeing

## Inclusive Education CoP event 4 August 2020 - Mentimeter responses

### Question 1

**Practice sharing: one teaching/learning/support practice that is helping maintain students' mental wellbeing**

#### Attendee responses

* Identifying and discussing self-care strategies in Week 1 to encourage students to think about their wellbeing and identify what might work for them. We keep coming back to this at regular intervals.
* supportive and encouraging news posts acknowledging isolation hardship and the importance of persevering with studies. Posting recent interviews with current health professionals discussing their adaptive practices during covid to model change.
* Encourage students to form groups for group assignments at the beginning of the trimester as it can help them to create small support group.
* Emails-touching base, phone calls, access to resources, regular contact with students
* Connecting students in small groups and reaching out to individuals to highlight their strengths in ways that are personalised and genuine.
* Recognising stressful times in their experience.
* being available and authentic and showing some empathy
* support practice
* I wonder what specifically, with regards to assessment design or policy would have helped our speakers to persist with their studies or improve the experience?
* Surveying students to find out about the specific circumstances and predilections of this cohort before locking in the structure and content of the unit. (You have to do this violation of specific Head of School directive not to contact before tri)
* Be proactive about developing presence as a teacher in online learning: post informal and encouraging weekly updates via short video recording, regular Zoom drop in sessions, and encouraging students when they support each other.
* Providing clear and early instructions to students so that they can come prepared for class.
* I think the student's not comparing their performance/results to other students is very important. Appearances can be quite misleading and comparing yourself to others can often lead to depression and other mental strain.
* Practice quizzes with feedback before Assessment quizzes.
* Agreed. Key learnings could be reviewed each trimester/ year as with units to see what adjustments need to be made to our collective approach. This would also be helpful for student support teams to be able to advise on the collective approach.
* *(Suggestion shared in chat)*: "Failure Time" is a concept used in the AIME Mentoring program, ""In Failure Time, mentors had the opportunity to try something they have not previously done, or weren't particularly good at, in a safe space where failure was ok!" This could be an idea for when new topics are introduced in teaching? https://aimementoring.com/

### Question 2

**Food for thought: one thing you'd like to see to support student mental health and wellbeing**

#### Attendee responses

* Resilience workshops or interactive resources that are embedded in our teaching to link with students so we are talking the talk and walking the walk with them rather than it being seen as a separate service/area of the University
* Open discussion between staff and students
* less focus on assessment or another 'kinder' way to assess
* Help them understand how food can affect their mood and mental health
* Seminar groups small enough (<40) so you can actually engage with them as individuals rather than en masse. Time to actually engage in dialogic feedback.
* A move away from exams as that is one factor that causes immense stress in students.
* Recognition of the pastoral care work that those teaching and supporting first year students undertake. Supporting the teachers really helps students.

### Question 3

**What would you like to ask the panellists about teaching and curriculum design to support mental wellbeing?**

1. *Q: How can we embed wellbeing into our curriculum so students feel valued in the University community as a whole?*

A: (Karen) Apply good teaching practice, review whole of university standards of practice to ensure they incorporate [Susie’s ideas](ttps://www.slideshare.net/susiemac/curriculum-strategies-supporting-students-mental-health) and/or ideas in the [Enhancing student wellbeing](http://unistudentwellbeing.edu.au) website.

2*. Q: What is the best question/way to frame a check-in on students’ well-being as a group?*

A: (Karen) Provide a safe space for students to be honest and open. Acknowledge when students publicly state something that shows their vulnerability. Manage students’ disrespectful or insensitive behaviour. Ask the question RUOK but provide a number of avenues for the students to respond (so students don’t have to publicly respond that they are not doing well).

3. *Q: How do we monitor our students?*

A: (Karen) This is very challenging in this current environment and will depend upon the number of students you are teaching.

It is the shared responsibility of staff and students to notice changes in behaviour/ interactions/ mood/ cognitive functioning. Of course, students are known to not be aware, or choose to minimise their mental state, or are too afraid to admit to self or others that they are not coping. In which case staff can only do the best they can to notice these changes, and follow up individually to ask if what you have noticed is a change for that student.  Eg., “So when you say you are struggling to …….., has this recently changed for you?”

The University has also set up some monitoring of students’ engagement in first year (Priority Students Program) and success coaches (who are student leaders) then reach out to students to see what additional supports can assist.

4. *Q: How do we balance challenge with support in an environment of minimal contact time with students?*

A: (Susie) Some ideas for curriculum and assessment design that support and challenge students and that don’t depend on one on one contact with the teacher:

* Interactive HTML CloudDeakin learning resources that clearly and concisely explain key concepts and model practices
* Interactive HTML CloudDeakin learning resources that allow students to apply their learning in a range of increasingly complex contexts
* formative assessments that allow students to practice, share, review and discuss their work
* summative assessments that start with early low stakes assessment, progressively increasing in difficulty and weighting.

Also, to both challenge and support students, it is useful to implement strategies to develop students’ evaluative judgement through:

* providing opportunities for students to understand and unpack the expected standards e.g. students use all or part of the rubric to evaluate exemplars in H5P, or peer evaluate each others’ work (this can even be done without sharing the feedback if students are not sufficiently expert)
* design opportunities for students to use feedback from one task to plan the next
* students reflect on and evaluate their work or progress with their submission
* students request feedback on a particular aspect of their work
* dialogic feedback - students receive feedback on their self-evaluation.