Teaching and curriculum design to support mental wellbeing panel discussion transcript

MARY DRACUP: Take a moment to pay respect to your traditional custodians of the lands where you're located in the chat, if you like. I should note I've also just started the recording, so please just accept that.

I would like to pay my respects to the elders past, present, and emerging. And I'd like to extend my respect also to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who are with us today. Our panel doesn't really need to tell any Victorian higher education staff, and students that COVID-19 is having a major impact on the mental wellbeing of students and staff. We timed this event for Mental Health Week. And I don't think there could actually be a better time to bring in a university student mental health and wellbeing strategy, particularly this week as we face stage four COVID restrictions.

We're privileged to have the strategy author Karen Stuart to give us the first presentation of this strategy today. And also to have our colleagues and student members on the panel to share their research and experience on how curriculum in particular can make a difference to student mental wellbeing. It just seems incredibly relevant at the moment. We've allocated some pre-sent questions to the various panel members. And if you have further questions or comments, please, could you post those in the chat? And we'll have a little bit of time at the end to deal with them. So please, could you keep your microphones muted throughout? We'll also be using *Mentimeter* for some practice sharing. I've set up a couple of slides and I'll put the link in the chat very soon. This is to invite you to share some good strategies that you're already using to support student mental wellbeing and also things that you'd like to do in the future. So there are two slides there, and please feel free to use that.

And now I'd like to introduce Lisa Hanna, our Dean of students who will be moderating a discussion. Lisa has been a teaching and research academic in the Faculty of Health at Deakin for over ten years and has taught widely at postgraduate and undergraduate levels. And as many of us know, is passionate about facilitating and promoting excellence in all aspects of the student experience. So over to you, Lisa.

LISA HANNA: Thank you so much Mary, I'm delighted to be here today and to be moderating this discussion as I just wanted to echo everything that Mary said about, that as teachers and our students and as professional staff members, we're here to ensure that Deakin is the most positive environment as possible for our whole university community. And we've got, we're all heavily invested in promoting student wellbeing and staff wellbeing for that matter as well.

I'm really pleased to be leading this conversation today, particularly around how we can use approaches in our teaching and curriculum design to optimise the wellbeing of all of our university community and the students who are the consumers of the curriculum that we produce. And I know we have a wide range of experts here, I'm really looking forward to hearing the conversations and discussions, and particularly at this time with the impact of COVID and the second lockdown here in Victoria impacting so many of us.

As Dean of Students, I hear a lot from students, both informally and formally through concerns and complaints that there is, but also just in my conversations, consultations with them. And I know that the, the lived experience of, of many of our students, both domestic and international over the last few months has been particularly challenging and disruptive, which is not news to anybody, everyone, all of you will know this.

But I think just to echo what Mary said, It is so timely that we are in fact starting to talk about this wonderful mental health and wellbeing strategy that Karen and her colleagues have developed with wide consultation across the university. At this point in Mental Health Week when we're thinking about our students who are under such pressure because of structural and environmental and social conditions that are beyond their control and what we as an institution and the community can do to support that.

So without holding the floor, I would like to begin by introducing Karen Stuart who will speak to us first, we're going to have a few different speakers today. They'll each speak for and 10 to 15 minutes, there'll be an opportunity for questions. You can put questions in the chat as well. So I will hopefully be as interactive and as discursive as possible. We really want to hear your experiences, your perspectives, and so on as well us out of the speakers.

So firstly Karen is going to speak with us. Karen has more than 25 years of experience, clinically as a registered clinical psychologist, working across settings including psychiatric rehabilitation, community mental health, primary care, private practice, forensics, and Victoria Police. Karen came to Deakin about ten years ago to lead our counselling and psychological support service here at Deakin based in Burwood. She provides consultation to all of the Deakin community about student mental health and is currently, as I've said, the Deakin student mental health and wellbeing strategy leader. So Karen's passion is building mental health literacy across our community and across the Deakin community so that we can all support those of us with mental health issues and the students within our community to enable them to thrive, truly thrive both mentally and emotionally, during their time at Deakin and at higher education. So it's my great pleasure to hand over to Karen and looking forward to hearing from you Karen. Great.

KAREN STUART: Thank you so much, Lisa. So I thought I would just give a quick overview of what I'd like to cover today. I would ask that you continue asking questions through the chat and we'll hold off on answering them as much as I can until the panel discussion.

So today I'm just going to really touch on some of impacts that we know of around student mental health on their academic success. Going to also provide an overview of the Deakin student mental health and wellbeing strategy. And then touch on some curriculum processes that students have identified who attend the counselling service just as a starting point for us to be thinking about what we could be doing differently or better.

Before I go any further, I would like to acknowledge that it's highly likely that people who are attending today will have either lived experience of mental health conditions or who might be caring for people with lived experience. That's always important to acknowledge. So most people now, particularly most Australians, have heard of the expression of one in five Australians will experience a common mental illness in any one year. Unfortunately, when we start to look at the university population, that then becomes one in four students are likely to experience a common mental illness in any one year. Then we start to think about our specific cohorts within the university population who might be at greater risk of mental health conditions, including the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, but also the LGBTIQ+ community. And then there are other pockets which if need be, we can go into at a later stage.

So students have actually got a broad range of mental health concerns. So although we know about mental health conditions or mental illness, we also know that the student population has a wide variety of mental health problems that go from sort of mild to moderate to more severe. But really what we're also interested in is looking at how we can help students become more mentally healthy. How they can thrive mentally and emotionally within the university context. So often we might be dealing with students that don't necessarily have a diagnosed mental illness. That really some of the impacts of their emotional world is significant. So rather than look at what sort of diagnostics I'm, I think what's important in this space today is for us to keep in mind some of the challenges that our students experience, particularly when they're struggling with their mental wellbeing.

So I've just got here some of the really common ones that we see through the counselling service.
So the other thing that we know is that if students are experiencing those sort of experiences then it starts to impact on their success academically. And again through the counselling service, here is some of the common impacts on academic life that students who are experiencing mental health concerns start to struggle with and we're often providing support in helping them to better manage these challenges.

I also wanted to highlight here what we already know from research and other surveys, etc, that health and stress is the number one reason why students are choosing to leave university. And thus, we know that stress is a big trigger for deteriorating mental wellbeing. And so of course, we need to be thinking about this in the context of the impact of COVID-19. So instead of talking about all the, you know, sort of presentations that we see through the counselling service I thought I would start by just offering some, some common quotes from students who have accessed the counselling service. So I'll allow you just a few minutes reading through those. I must admit some of them can be quite confronting. So if, just be mindful of that.

The other thing I wanted to mention was that I reviewed the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan. And in there they state the following, which is currently available data indicate that there's a high level of reported anxiety and psychological distress in the general population. And some of those with severe, complex and chronic mental illnesses have actually disconnected from services. And there is also strong evidence from previous pandemics and broad research that there are risks of increasing mental ill health, including new presentations of mental distress and illness, increased substance use, and increased risk of suicide in the longer term.

And there are a variety of predictions out there in the media at the moment. But one I picked up was that we're predicting a 25% increase in suicide rates, which is really alarming. What I can say if we bring it back to what we know from the counselling service, we have actually had a 5% reduction year-to-date of people using the counselling service. So in many ways we think that particularly in our two busiest months, April and May, was because I think the students weren't reaching out. They were waiting for the time where they could come back and visit their counsellor face-to-face, or they're so busy trying to navigate the new changed world, that counselling as is seen as sort of something further down the list of things to do.

But we've also really aware of those who are reaching out and providing are getting support from the counselling service, there is definitely more in an increase in suicidal thinking. Definitely an increase in anxiety and depression. Definitely an increase in a feeling of isolation, but also feeling trapped and being very overwhelmed in having to manage everything. So we also know that students are seeking to decrease this study load and take intermission as they face trimester two.

So they're very worried about how they're going to sustain themselves over more than one trimester with going fully online. Particularly given stage three and four restrictions have expanded and increased. So now more than ever, we need to progress the whole of the university approach to addressing student mental wellbeing. So then we come to the student mental health and wellbeing strategy.

So this strategy actually commenced really late in 2018, Diversity and Inclusion actually initiated a first draft. And then throughout the last year, 2019, we did a lot of work to really bring the document together and get endorsement. And after several rounds of consultation with a broad range of people across the university. And we also obviously made sure it was aligned with other research and other information that we knew across universities across Australia.

So as I said, it was endorsed at the end of last year by our senior management group and it was also presented to the student learning and experiencing plan group. And in late December or actually it was mid-December last year, we developed a task force of senior members of the organisation in order for them to progress the implementation. So we have listed down the bottom of this slide the SharePoint. It was also included in the invitation where you are most welcome to go and read through the entire document. Obviously, I'm not going to have time to go through every part of it today.

This year has been interrupted in terms of progressing it as much as we would have liked because of the COVID-19 impact, however, we have managed to start mapping some of the existing initiatives and programs that are aligned to the strategy. And next year we're hoping to start to build in more sort of innovations. So, terms of the vision I haven't read that out, but you can see we are aspiring and minimising the adverse impact of mental health difficulties on learning and participation in university life. And we're also aspiring to value and optimise our student mental health and wellbeing. So we're not just focused on mental health conditions, end of the continuum. We're actually wanting to address this across the whole continuum so we can optimise student wellbeing.

So within the strategy, I've thought, and I hope that this would address at least one of the questions that was raised beforehand. This strategy is very definitely focused on trying to unify and bring together a number of initiatives and programs, and really look at a whole of University approach. We've got some great pockets of success and great pockets of initiatives and programs. But we see value in having it as a whole of University approach.

We're also looking at a holistic perspective. So that's working with students across the whole continuum of mental wellbeing. But also in recognition that we need to be addressing the social determinants of mental health conditions. Legitimising and destigmatising goes a long way to assist students and staff to feel more comfortable in addressing concerns that they have around student mental health. Encouraging students to link in with appropriate supports if they're finding their mental wellbeing is impacting their academic life.

Student-centered is obviously a huge principal for the strategy. And when I say student-centered, I mean working with students as partners. So very definitely an important principle of the strategy implementation. And the evidence based, we have as I said to you have a number of programs and initiatives that are happening across the university. What we're keen to find out is, where is the evidence that it is having the intended impact on improving mental wellbeing.

Not surprisingly, we also have to have a principal around collaboration and partnering. And so that's definitely an important principle. I put in there the proactive approach and one that advocates for change. I can't help myself, I am a psychologist, so I need to say behavioural concrete change. I don't want this strategy just to be a document that we spent a whole lot of time talking about, I need that to be translated into action and ultimately change the culture of the organisation or improve the culture of the organisation so that it does become more inclusive and really promoting and optimsing student wellbeing.

So, the strategy does outline seven strategic directions. I won't have time to go through all seven of them. What I've done is chosen to focus on those that are most relevant to our discussion today. Which is the first one, which is organisational structure, planning and policy. So this is really about focusing us on embedding mental health as a key strategic imperative. We need to be able to review our policies and procedures, looking at designing curriculum, and considering how we go about teaching with a mental health lens.

Or at least to consider how our curriculum is designed and implemented so that it optimises mental wellbeing. And then a second one is supporting an inclusive university. This is really about Deakin creating an environment, including a learning environment that facilitates a sense of belonging and connectedness in order that we can enhance positive mental wellbeing. And obviously this is particularly pertinent in the current pandemic.

The other one I'll mention is the self-management competencies and coping skills. So in this strategic direction, the focus is very much about strengthening student resilience, strengthening their capacity to flourish, and to better be able to better manage the demands of student life. And this will set them up not only within their life at the university, but also in the future careers. So we'd be looking at initiating university-wide resilience programs that's made available obviously to all students.

So as part of the implementation, the taskforce met in February and agreed to developing five action groups to create an implementation plan to address each of those seven strategic directions. So for today's setting, I'm only going to mention a couple of those groups, which is basically the task force. And I believe that if we really want cultural change, we can't just continue supporting students with mental health concerns. We really need to look at what are the environmental, what are the policies and procedures.

So as a consequence of that, one of the action groups that we have created is going to be focusing on policy and procedure. And thankfully, Thank you Lisa. Lisa Hanna has agreed to be a taskforce sponsor for the action group that's going to be looking at policy and procedure. And Matt Brett is leading that action group.

And then the other one that's highly relevant for us today is a dedicated action group that's going to look at curriculum and teaching. Liz Johnson has agreed to sponsor this action group and Marcus O'Donnel is leading the curriculum and teaching action group. So those two groups are obviously going to have to work and work very closely together in order to make sure that any changes or enhancements that we make within the curriculum and teaching space is also reflected in particularly the procedures, components of the organisation.

Okay, so happy to talk more about, in more detail about the strategy, but I thought that I would spend a bit of time now just giving you a snapshot of some of the common curriculum, policy and procedural issues that are raised through our students that visit the counselling service. So here we've got some examples of some of the challenges that students, and again, these are students who, who do find their way to our counselling service often sort of share with us in terms of finding, these curriculum, policy and procedural issues are really adding and compounding the stress and significantly contributing to their mental wellbeing.

The other thing I've put down the bottom here, and again, I know that this website is actually a few years old, so it may well be that your already well and truly on top of this, but obviously it is a website and we had quite a bit of consideration provided with the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education. Who've actually been working in this space for number of years now. But they have actually put together this website that really helps universities to consider how they might review the curriculum and teaching policies, procedures in order to enhance the student wellbeing, mental wellbeing. So I would encourage people to visit that site if they had not already familiar with it. Within that site, they do actually go on and suggests that research has been conducted into how curriculum design might, inadvertently undermine the student mental wellbeing. And what they say is if students feel pressured or controlled or if I don't feel like their ideas have been acknowledged or heard, that that can often undermine their mental wellbeing. If student's capacities or prior knowledge and experience is actually wrongly assumed or, or to be assumed to be greater than it actually is then that discrepancy between what and how information and teaching is provided may actually inadvertently impact student mental wellbeing.

The website also goes on to talk about if the students don't have opportunities to build personal interactions between their peers, their students, between each other, but also between the students and faculty. Those sort of positive relationships really. If they don't have those positive relationships that can undermine the student mental wellbeing.

And then the other component they mention is that if the curriculum does not offer optimal challenge, then that can also inadvertently impact the student's wellbeing. So the project actually, the project team that's listed in this website also talk about recommending some curriculum enhancements. So the sort of things they've talked about is providing competency assessments and feedback on student work rather than a normative grading system. They have also suggested allowing students greater flexibility in how they approach tasks and topics that they study. Streamlining the traditional curriculum content and reducing contact hours to increase space for personal time and other commitments. We know that students often say, we're time poor, we're time poor.

The website also lists equipping students with skills to manage stress, uncertainty and unknowns, as well as conflicts. Again, this is highly pertinent in our current pandemic environment and also supporting students to find meaning and positivity in the tasks that they are required to perform. What I like about this website is they do provide a number of examples at different universities within Australia. Again, pockets of how curriculum design and curriculum changes is really impacting and improving their mental wellbeing.

Examples that I can think off the top of my head is Monash University a few years ago, certainly introduced some personal development components to their medical school. We have yes, some other examples on the website. So if you are not already familiar with that, I would strongly recommend that you visit. So the other thing I'd like to comment on, really at the end, is recognising that if we are really keen on helping staff to support our students mental wellbeing, we need to start by ensuring that you're looking after yourself.

And so I wanted to take this opportunity to remind everybody particularly as much as we're talking about COVID-19 impacting our students. It's also impacting us and obviously, particularly this week. Yes, it's Mind matters week for our students, but it's also acknowledging that we're on the cusp of significant change with a new strategic plan. But also organisational change as a consequence of COVID-19. So the good news is we do have an employee assistance program that is a little bit far-reaching than perhaps what we've historically had.

And then the only other thing I would like to comment is that we do have an online tool to support staff to help students in distress. It's something that we created earlier this year, but as this year progresses, we anticipate that student distress will continue to increase. I strongly recommend that you visit this website or SharePoint site, I should say. So I've gone a minute over, Mary. So I'll finish now, and other than to say thank you for listening. And I'm really, really, keen to learn from those of you who obviously work in this space and are familiar with thinking about how curriculum and teaching can really optimise our student wellbeing.

LISA HANNA: Thank you so much, Karen, and, and really appreciate your presentation, particularly that last slide, I think for those of us who have regular contact with students, I know as Dean of Students that the support and referral resource is one that I have used a lot myself when dealing with students, but also have passed it on to a large number of staff. So I would encourage all other staff to be aware of that. And the wellbeing liaison team have been superb in following up with students that I've interacted with.

Now, please do folks, we've got a few minutes for questions, and of course we'll have a panel discussion at the end. So please do pop anything that you would like to ask Karen in the chat. If you've got time in the next couple of minutes, we'll get to it. Otherwise, we'll pull together questions for our panel discussion eventually.

But Karen, I just wanted to kick off, if I may, by asking you, you mentioned something about just at the end there about students distress potentially rising. And I guess one of the, one of the queries we've had is given the increased prevalence of at least self-reported mental health conditions. And, and arguably the, the stress and strain that students are experiencing. And what do you think is likely to happen in the future? I mean, I know none of us have a crystal ball, but given the trajectory so far around the information we know about student's mental health. What do you think or what do we need to consider as an institution in terms of future proofing and ensuring that we're providing the best possible support to our students?

KAREN STUART: Yeah, I think I think that in the medium term, I think we are going to see more and more distress, and I think we will, where we're likely to see that worst-case scenario in resulting in increased suicidality. So it it you know, I don't know the percentage, but I do think we are going to have a lot of students who get to point where they run out of options. If I think about it in the context of Deakin, we've been incredibly responsive. We've been incredibly generous with trying to put in additional supports in place for students in the short-term. But we also know that can't be sustained medium, long term. And so I think that's part of my comment about expecting and anticipating that the distress will continue is as our other resources to provide that sort of crutch in the short-term. Has to then be stretched out to medium and long-term.

I think we are going to see students really struggle with coming to an acceptance that maybe now's not the right time for us to continue studying. Because they don't have the financial resources, you know, the families in their home country are obviously being significantly impacted. There are families in Australia who, who have been trying to support their children to, through university are going to have to re-think that. I think the disconnection that has already been happening for students and that's why they're starting to opt for stepping out of the university space, I think part of it's about helping students understand what, so what happens if you're not connected at university, so its also about helping them to think through, well, actually, even though university might look really different at the moment. It may still be a positive thing for your wellbeing. Because at least it provides at least some level of structure to connect.

And I think that's often and I've, I've even got a personal story, I've got a nephew that was thinking about dropping out of his, or intermitting his course for this semester. And he's not at Deakin unfortunately, and we're doing a lot of work. And I think this is relevant to us, the staff, work with him to think about, let's think through what you're going to do if you're not studying, and how's that going to lead to an enjoyable life? And if they're not working and they're not studying, and they're not connecting, yeah, maybe, university can be seen as something that's proactive and positive in their life. It's just about making sure we continue doing what we can do, which they're increasing flexibility about approach and increasing flexibility about, you know, making sure that we we are more flexible in our policies and procedures around keeping those students engaged.

LISA HANNA: Thank you. Karen and I know Petra has put a question in the chat about first-year students and I think maybe we need to move on to our next presenter, Petra but noted, and I think in fact Karen, some of your response has covered some of Petra's questions about first-year students in that transition process specifically. But we'll park that and come back to it at the end if that's okay.

So thank you so much to Karen for giving us an overview of the student mental health and wellbeing strategy on our overall institutional focus. Look forward to picking up on many of the points that you've raised, Karen.

And I'd like to move on now to introduce Tiarnan. Now Tiarnan, I'm really happy you have come to speak to us today. Tiarnan Cleary is the current president of DUSA, our Deakin University Student Association. And Tiarnan under normal circumstances is based at Burwood, although like everyone else in Melbourne is currently in a more confined environment. And so Tiarnan's role as DUSA president includes chairing meetings of the DUSA student council, and the DUSA executive. And he liaise with his executive with senior university management such as BC and DVC and even sometimes myself Tiarnan and an exec, and with senior university management on issues that matter to students. As well as promoting student engagement both on and off campus.

So Tiarnan has a really firm interest in student representation on student issues and has had so through out his degree, with a strong passion for student advocacy and action, which I can certainly attest to, and that you bring into your role as DUSA president, Tiarnan. So thank you so much for being here to speak on behalf of the student community, Tiarnan. And I'd be really great if you could just, just hand over to you to speak to us for a few minutes or as long as you would like.

TIARNAN CLEARY: Certainly. Thanks everyone for having me today. I thought it would be a really good opportunity for me to talk about my lived experience as a first year student at Deakin, because it was the polar opposite to sort of where I'm at now and sort of my head space, but also, academically as well.

So, to go back... You know I was at the end of Year 12, I was sort of, I was very confident, you know, I went to school in sort of an, in an eastern suburb of Melbourne, like I've had quite a privileged, sort of education, lived at home with both my parents, had a very strong established friendship group, and I was going into university with confidence and a sense of purpose. You know, I got into my course that I wanted. I was really happy. And so I got to O week, and O week was great. I met a bunch of amazing first year students as well. I will add sort of, I went to Deakin, sort of on my own. So no one from my school, went to Deakin, a lot of them went to sort of Melbourne and Monash. So it was really sort of like stepping out of a familiar environment for the first time for me. So yeah, I met a lot of people in my first week during O week. But after O Week, I've never seen any of them again. And that's, the reason I want to sort of speak to my experiences because at the time I thought it was quite unique.

But now, through my role on DUSA, I've come to learn that it's actually quite a familiar experience for quite a lot of first year students. So, going into sort of week one of the trimester, I very quickly sort of lost that confidence. And, I lost that sense of purpose, and I lost that sense of belonging. I didn't feel like I belonged at university. And you go from high school where you have that sort of friendship group that you've spent the last six years, or so, developing in finessing and, and sort of immediately sort of thrown out of the nest. And, and you're staring, you know, you're staring, into like a 500 seat lecture theatre where a teacher isn't even looking at any particular student that's sort of just staring into the abyss, talking to like all these first year commerce students. And you see like these little friendship groups around you, a lot of them probably came from high school together. And it really starts to take a toll.

In my first year at uni, I met one friend. And the only reason I met that friend is because I was in an accounting lecture, and the lecturer said "turn to the person next to you and introduce yourself".
So I was put into a situation where I, I was asked by the teacher to introduce myself to another student. And that's the only person, I made friends with in my first year, and probably one of the only students I spoke to full stop my first year. And I was, I was seeing my friends from high school and seeing what they were doing. They all seemed to be thriving, whether or not that's the case, I'm not sure. Sort of social media is very good at sort of showing the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

But the biggest thing for me is I didn't have that purpose, so I didn't have that belonging. And very quickly, my attention span in class disappeared. I was dreading coming to uni every, every morning I'd be sitting on that tram going to that 09:10 AM lecture, I didn't know why I was going. I wasn't enjoying my unit. It wasn't that I wasn't passionate, passionate about the course. I'm, I'm still doing that course now and I'm loving it. It's just I didn't feel like I belonged at Deakin. And sure, there's probably a bit of it that was a little self-destructive. You come from year 12 where you're sort of the top of the school, into this new environment and you think, I'm too cool for this. Like, I'm not going to going to introduce myself to people and try and get them to be my friend, like I've got my friends.

As I said before, very quickly you saw them moving away as well. And it got to the point where, trimester two of my first year was probably the hardest time of my life. Mentally, I made the decision to drop out of my degree. So I intermitted my course, and I thought that would help. It didn't help, it made it so much worse, it it amplified every single feeling I had of not having a purpose, not having a belonging. It just amplified all of it.

And I was, I was suffering from really major, like I think it's called brain fog, where you're just waking up in the morning and like you don't even know what you're waking up for because you're sitting in your room, you're not going to class because you've intermitted, and there's just no purpose there. And it got to the point where I sort of told myself. Like I need to speak to someone about this. But I didn't want to because I didn't want to admit to myself that I'd put myself in a situation for the first time in my life where mentally I was, I wasn't in a place I want it to be, you know, I was school captain in high school. Like I said, I had like a a strong sort of friendship group. I've always been quite confident. So for that to happen so quickly and for that sense of purpose and belonging to be snatched away so quickly was jarring and I didn't want to really admit even to myself that happened.

But I did speak to people. And the number one advice that came out from people was you need to get more involved with clubs and societies. You need to really get out there and sort of put yourself out there and speak to people. And it sounded like such a cliche. I just didn't want to do it. But I made the decision that I'd go back to uni, to Deakin for trimester one the following year. And I told myself the first club that comes up to me, I'm going to sign up to it. And I was sitting in a visions and values and politics lecture. And I was re-doing that unit because I failed it the previous, the previous year. I was sitting in that lecture. and at the start of that class, a student came in and they were advertising a club. And that's where I told myself like, this is it, I'm going to sign up. So I signed up. And at that point, from meeting that person is really how I got where I am now. That person is, they really introduce me to DUSA, so they introduce me to, to do volunteer work and getting more involved.

LISA HANNA: Tiarnan. Thank you so much for sharing such a powerful personal story. I think that really has been incredibly insightful and resonant for, certainly for me, but for lots of other staff I imagine here who have also taught first year students or, or any students for that matter. So thank you for sharing so openly and honestly within this type of forum, we don't have an enormous amount of time for individual questions. I just wanted to ask one question of Tiarnan and if you've got any, Petra asked what club it was that you joined Tiarnan, you may or may not want to answer that now?

TIARNAN CLEARY: Deakin international affairs club.

LISA HANNA: Okay, so clearly that is the, that's the springboard to a successful career as DUSA President. Thank you, Tiarnan. And I see in the chat, that many people are also thanking you for your powerful story. And just one quick question before we move on to the next speaker, if I may and please everyone else, feel free to pop any questions in chat. We'll revisit them at the end.

But I wondered, from and thank you for sharing your own perspective Tiarnan. From your perspective now, and thankfully, and a much, a much stronger place and happier place and feeling more belonging as a student, how do you see the current challenges impacting student's success and retention and experience, over the time that you've been president? Over a very discombobulating time?

TIARNAN CLEARY: Yeah. Well, I think sort of looking back into sort of early April, March when the university really started taking COVID seriously, and it was almost everyday, sort of that senior management were sending out emails, with updates. Back then students, really, their main concern was still, well, what does this mean for my studies? What does this mean for, for my degree? I don't think that was really until that first lockdown where students sort of realised, oh, well, this doesn't look like it's going anywhere, anytime soon. And sort of interestingly, once we had that first lockdown and, when it happened so quickly, I sort of found myself quite quickly going back to where I was in first year, sort of I lost, that sense of purpose. I didn't have that sense of belonging. I was really grappling with this, this idea that my chance as DUSA president has been snatched away because we're not on campus. And yeah, just sort of being left at home alone, like that. Being left with your thoughts can be great, but it can also be absolutely terrible. And you can, you can, yeah, you can just see sort of this, this was my experience as someone who, generally speaking as quite a good mental sort of outlook. I can only imagine what it must be like with those that have pre-existing conditions.

And I think it became quite clear quite early on that the onus of this crisis on the students and the onus of looking after the welfare of students is going beyond the university. Sort of very early on the government made it clear we're not going to have that support available for international students. And sort of I'm, I'm talking from the perspective of someone with job security and financial security. I had JobKeeper, where as so many international students that I know are really struggling. And myself as a president, and DUSA sort of had this realisation that we really need to shift our focus here. We went from O week where we were pumping out these massive engaging event sort of every week, for two weeks, every day for two weeks. These fun events to we really, gotta go back to our roots here and be a service here, and advocate for these students. And I can tell you that without a doubt, the university's 25 odd, billion dollar support fund has had a fundamental positive impact on students. And that's probably the proudest moment of the council this year, was, was being able to be a council at a university that had done such a massive thing for students.

I think, I'll just finish by saying, I think during the first lockdown, we suddenly felt like there was a sense of solidarity, sort of a whole country was in it together. Now that we're going into sort of stage four here in Victoria, it really feels like we're going this one alone. And I think that the biggest risk right now is there isn't that sense of hope and that sense of, sort of, you know end that we had before like, yeah, I know. I'm really worried about the long-term effect this will have on on student's mental health.

LISA HANNA: Yeah, thank you so much Tiarnan and I think you've given us so many insights. I think all of us will carry into the classroom and in our interactions with students. And I'm sure there'll be, and there's loads to follow up in the chat and commenting on your your perspectives. So I very much appreciate it.

So folks, we're going to move on. Thank you, Tiarnan. We're going to move on now to introducing Sally. Sally Buchanan-Hagen, who is a lecturer in Nursing here at Deakin in our School of Nursing and Midwifery. Sally's got a background in emergency nursing, and mental health education, and has also been a consumer academic at the Centre for Psychiatric Nursing, providing the lived experience perspective of mental illness and recovery in learning and teaching and research. Sally's also volunteered with the Black Dog Institute as a youth presenter and has written for several publications on the topic of mental illness and recovery. She's been involved in various statewide research projects related to improving mental health care and delivered keynote presentations about her learnings from her lived experience of mental distress and illness at various national and international nursing conferences. She has several awards for her advocacy work within the mental health space. So we're, we're really privileged, and I'm delighted to have Sally here with us today to share from her experience. Over to you Sally.

SALLY BUCHANAN-HAGEN: Thanks Lisa, and thanks for inviting me onto the panel. I'm really excited to be here. I guess I thought, How can I use my ten minutes best? And I am going to speak about my experience of being a university student and going through the early stages of a mental illness, not really knowing what was happening. And also as a employee, I'll talk about as an employee with a mental health condition primarily in the emergency department, in the clinical setting. And then my key learnings and how I use those learnings in my teaching and learning now as a Lecturer.

So, I guess my story with mental, with my mental health condition began when I was 14 when I first started having episodes of depression. But it wasn't really until I turned 18 that things started to ramp up a little bit. So I left high school when I had just turned 18 started uni straightaway. And. By then I knew I would go through episodes of depression and I knew what depression was because I was learning about it. And it terrified me. I really wanted to go bury my head in the sand. I didn't want to engage with any mental health content at all, which I find funny now that that's a lot of what I do. But I really, really resisted it. I really push back against it quite hard.

And I remember doing my mental health placement, which was a four week placement in an acute inpatient psychiatric setting. And I remember thinking I'm going to end up I'm going to end up in a place like this. And it was terrifying. It was absolutely terrifying as one of the hardest times of my life. And looking back now ten years later, I don't know how I got through that four weeks. But during my undergraduate degree, I also had episodes of high energy where I didn't really need much sleep. I could get a lot of stuff done. I was quite busy and that was really how I got through my Bachelor of Nursing.

During episodes of depression, I was really quite sluggish. I was fatigued, I was lethargic. It was really hard getting out of bed. I had cognitive slowing, so learning and retention was quite difficult. And then I'd have these times of high energy. So I would do all of my work then. And looking back how I would have presented in the classroom. When I was depressed, I would've been that quiet student avoiding eye contact, not wanting to participate in whole great discussions. Just quite happy sitting there. And I think now if I had of been really strongly encouraged to participate in that big setting, I wouldn't have returned because during those times, it was a challenge enough, just getting out of bed and then catching the bus to go to uni. And if I had of being called upon to be vocal, it just would've been too hard for me to do. So that's something that I find quite important now as a lecturer and as a facilitator in terms of someone is really giving me signals that I do not want to participate in that large forum, that they're very welcome to just sit there and let it wash over them.

And then when I had periods of high energy, I was the chatty student. I was a little bit energetic. I was very enthusiastic in the classroom and was told to settle down a number of times. But I finished my bachelor degree. Towards the end of my bachelor degree, I did realise I needed help and I did go to my lecturer to ask for what services I could use and didn't really know what was happening. And so I did start to be engaged in the university counselling services then. So I finished my degree, started my honours degree, started my graduate year in nursing things started to ramp up, the depressions were getting worse. The periods of elevation and high-energy, we're also getting worse.

I remember submitting my literature review to my supervisors for feedback and I had to submit a lit review about, between 10 and 15,000 words, and I look back now and I'm very grateful that my supervisors read the whole thing to give me payback. But it wasn't until I started working in emergency, where I was doing night shift alongside day shifts. And that really was when the wheels fell off because I wasn't getting regular sleep. I didn't have a regular routine. And my mental health really, really suffered as a result of that and I ended up being re-diagnosed.

And what followed was a period of two years of hospitalisations in that time. And it is quite difficult. And I got to a point where I had to resign from my permanent position in the emergency department because my workplace wouldn't exempt me from night shifts. They wouldn't make reasonable adjustments for me. I did work casually there, but it was really difficult at 24 to have to make that decision to really realign your career focus and your goals, to put your health as your priority, especially when you're 24 and you're young and everything is going well. That was really hard and I felt like I couldn't pursue my goals of specialising in ED. And I felt like I didn't belong in the workplace. I really felt I wasn't valued that I wasn't accepted. So it was really difficult to rock up to work in that environment. And I felt like the qualities that made me a good worker and a good team mate such as being a supportive team mate, having initiative, being proactive, being reliable, dependable, were really overshadowed by my experiences and what had happened to me. But I got out of that. I did go back and I did do my postgraduate in emergency nursing. I finished my honours degree, I started teaching casually. I started doing research jobs, and then here I am today.

But I've, when I think back about my experiences and really what learnings I take now as a lecturer in terms of promoting student mental health and wellbeing in the classroom. And inclusion is that everybody goes through adversity. And it just so happened that my adversity is one that is attached with a significant stigma. And we see a vast majority of students in a year, and so we are seeing a lot of students who are going through various types of adversity. And really at the end of the day, adversity is adversity and people need a supportive environment where they have the time and space to go through that adversity and to grow as a result of that adversity. And we can be part of the picture for that student in our capacity as educators and facilitators as well.

I also learnt that everybody needs hope, everybody needs to feel valued. Everybody needs to feel like I belong. And that came out quite strongly Tiarnan in your story as well. And again, we facilitate that in the units that we create, we facilitate that and how we interact with students and discussion boards via email and BBC in these current times, but also in the on-campus seminars and simulations. And we have a really big role to play. Everybody belongs in that space. Everybody has a valued contribution. Everybody is accepted for who they are in that space. And we have hope for our students. We have hope that they will do well, that they will do well in the learning, that they will flourish. That they will pass their units perhaps not the first time around, but they will, or if they decide to withdraw or intermit. That they will go on and do something great.

So I think that's really important to be that champion of hope because I'm sure a lot of people have seen students who have lost that hope and their ability in themselves and their potential as well in the classroom. And two other lessons that I want to quickly talk about is that when I look back on my experience and it was really two years of being quite unwell there, the people who I interacted with in terms of the health professionals only saw a tiny percentage of my life in my whole 29 years. And I think I, we only see a tiny percentage of our student's life. And if we are teaching someone who may perhaps not be performing or whatever, the reason may be, I am very cognizant that this is just a small percentage of the student who I'm seeing. It's not a reflection on the student's abilities, their contributions or anything like that. And I think that's really important that we don't place that judgement on someone of who they are in that small, small time that we have with our students.

And finally, I think we are in a really privileged position as facilitators and educators to be able to boost our student's self-esteem and self-worth through education. We've probably all seen it when, when a student understands the concept and they get that spark, and something just clicked. And to be able to facilitate that, to be able to scaffold that learning, facilitate students to arrive at their own conclusion with their learning to arrive at their own links and to be active in their learning is incredible. It's really a privileged place to be because we may be at that point in time the only people who can facilitate that process with students who, where they are getting that self-confidence and self-esteem boost. And I think that's a really special place for us to be in and for us to work in. So I'm going to leave it there. And finally, just the importance of lived experience in teaching and learning, particularly in health, but in all disciplines. Yes, we, we need evidence-based knowledge, but we also need knowledge of stories and people's own experiences of their adversity.

LISA HANNA: Sally, thank you so much again for sharing your own, your own story so honestly and openly. And having such profound insights that will help all of us who are interacting with students in terms of creating those, those welcoming spaces within the classroom and spaces that were valuing students on the holistic perspective from students and helping them grow and achieve.

In the interests of time I'm going to pause questions for individual speakers at the minute. Sorry Sally. Please do pop any comments or questions you have in the chat, and we'll come back to them so that we can have a panel discussion at the end. But now it's, Thank you so much again, Sally. We all really enjoyed that presentation.

So now it's my great pleasure to invite Tegan to share her perspectives with us. Tegan Whitten is a Bachelor of Health Sciences student with a double Major in Psych and in Environmental Health. She's also the current DUSA accessibility and services rep for Geelong. So Tegan has lived experience of what it's like to study with a disability and a chronic medical condition, living with a range of both physical and mental health conditions. She aims to bring awareness to the voices of students who often don't have a voice. Through her work in student representation and governance across the university. Tegan approaches her work with the understanding that many students herself included don't always feel supported and welcomed in academic spaces. And that we, as an institution and as teachers, as community must always be working harder to support these students and most importantly, to make their voices heard. So Tegan, delighted to hand over to you.

TEGAN WHITTEN: So I'm just going to talk about I'm talking about first a bit about my lived experience, but then also what I think we can practically do because I think it's important that from lived experience we can take something as well. So I came into uni with a mental illness. I had it from like mid to late High School and enjoyed doing year 12 while also doing like intense half-day therapy, so that was great. My first year of uni was pretty good. I somehow managed to do eight subjects in a year. I don't know how, but I did.

But then, kind of in second-year it kind of, I think hit a bit more. I was hospitalised for quite a long period of time. I somehow, what stands out to be most from my time then is that I managed to do practice. I was doing biomedical science at the time, so I managed to do practicals from psych hospitals in that I would get my parents to drive me to the practical. I will leave for the hospital, get my parents to drive me to the practical. I think I would do psych hospital. I think that's, like that's the kind of picture I have of balancing uni at that time. I think that I had extreme privilege and being able to access those health care services. That was a private psych hospital because the public system was just full. And they literally just told me that I would have to go and sit in ED because that will like we can't help you. And I think I have extreme privilege, not only to give a lecture on the peak flaws of a healthcare system, but only that I was on my parents health care, health insurance. Private health insurance were we were able to afford those stays that were literally tens of thousands of dollars billed to our private health care, and it was all covered by them. I wouldn't never had been able to access these and I think I did have to remain a full-time student to access that though, which is just an awkward thing that we have.

And I think as a part time student now, I work to pay for my own. And I think the reason I bring this up is that, we can't all access solutions. And it is not as simple as maybe people think it is to access solutions. So international students don't have access to Medicare, they have private health insurance, but doesn't always cover everything. Regional and rural access to mental health care systems is quite poor at times. Internet intersectionality exists is basically my point and I don't. I think, I think that we need to be aware that when we're dealing with students, that because one student shows up in a different way to another, it doesn't mean they're not trying to get help. It could just be that there's huge barriers to them doing it. I've had counsellors that aren't queer or disability friendly. And I think sometimes we have to think out of boxes. And to be honest for all the times I've spent in institutionalised and medical settings, I think that being heard and having someone have space for you, no matter if they hold 50 degrees, or are a stranger at a bus stop. Its kind of the most powerful thing for most people. And I think that we can be that as, you know, whatever space we turn up in as individuals and then obviously point people in the direction of services. But I just think because a student shows up in a certain way doesn't mean that we assume there's no barriers to them kind of accessing things. And I think I'll touch on that later too.

In regards to COVID, I think the need for access as far as what we can do, the need for access isn't something that we should kind of assume. So I think we should try and because like I understand like lecturers and unit chairs and that kind of thing can have a lot, a lot of people in their classes. So I think we should just default to explaining things. So explain extensions, explain what the DRC is. I work with, I like get a lot of people in my role at DUSA that come to me and say, oh, I didn't think that my sensory condition was a disability or I didn't think that my depression that I've had four years was a disability. If there is a thing that they could use, an adjustment that the Disability Resource Centre could make, that would help that student. Like you can send them in that direction. Because things like captions, for example, or a transcript may actually help people who have processing issues because of the medication they're on or their mental illness or that kind of thing.

So I think like explaining things to a group of students or just everyone you're teaching is just like if you just do it to everyone, then the people who need it will get access to it. Because often people who have, who are like quite overwhelmed by everything that's going on. If you just present the information to people, it's a lot easier than going and seeking it. So if you just assume that everyone's coming from a point where they need information. And you can just pop it into like a unit site post, or something like that. I think that can prevent like alot of people having to go and seek information. And I think just like language matters, so if a student is emailing me, like saying they are trying their best, you can just kinda of be like support even the language that you use. I think most people, majority of unit chairs and that kind of thing that people are.

But I think like occasionally you can get it's just about like saying like, here's some support, we're here to support you and that kind of thing. Some policy changes that can be made but I think in regards to COVID I think we're pushing on time, but I think in regards to COVID, it is important to know that there's links between education and obviously the outside world. So we were talking, there was discussion before about kind of students needing to intermit. Students decided to intermit and stuff. And well, that's an option for some. We have to realise that that's not an option for everyone. For visa issues and for Centrelink issues, some people may need to continue to remain full time students because there's not a payment that they can receive otherwise. So we need to realise that there are some students who are kind of being pressured to remain full time, even if that's not the best thing for them. So, to suggest to students that they look at this study load, or that kind of thing. What I am saying is that there's always intersectional factors with people for why they are in the situation they are in. And so I think we just need to be aware of those. I think at the end of the day, the units that I've done well in as a student are the one we're being encouraged to show my understanding of the learning outcomes. Where I've been told special consideration was unfair to other students, is the ones where I've not done as well.

I think in my mind we'll maybe make progress on mental health issues in the curriculum is two fold. One is around the culture and when we realise our language use matters we encourage students to met learning outcomes. But realise that they do so, kind of through nurturing and encouragement and feeling comfortable in the space. And then the second one is to change policy and build greater and more accessible supports within Deakin, but also within the community and society. I think this is longer term, but I think we know the importance of this and we'll eventually get there. Thank you so much Tegan, and for those fabulous recommendations at the end, I think lots of food for thought. And I think you've done a great job in articulating how multiple potential areas of disadvantage can intersect, and the importance of nurturing and belonging and valuing our students regardless of where they are in relation to their journey with the content.

LISA HANNA: So thank you so much Tegan. I'm sorry to not stop for particular questions with Tegan, but as always, pop any comments or questions in the chat. And we'll revisit them after we a welcome our final speaker or panel member of the day, who is Susie Macfarlane.

Thank you again, Tegan. Very much. That was very much appreciated.

Now, moving on to Susie, who many of you will know, Susie is a senior lecturer in learning features working with the health pod team, teaching colleagues and others across the university and working to transform teaching and assessment at Deakin. Susie's passionate about co-creating, participatory and inclusive learning experiences and environments. And her research includes inclusive video and dialogic feedback, academic identity and sensual staff professional development. She's undertaking her PhD on evaluative judgement via CRADLE which is our Centre for Research and Assessment Digital Learning. And Susie a very warm welcome to the panel and thanks for speaking to us today.

SUSIE MACFARLANE: Alright, thanks Lisa. Thanks everyone. Thanks for the invitation to participate. It's lovely to be here. I, I guess I have an interesting background that relates to this area in that I trained initially as a psychologist. And now coming into this area of educational development, bringing some of the, those perspectives in, but recognising the scope of practice that we have as educators. I'm just going to share my screen. Hopefully everyone knows how to kind of reduce the size of the slides so that you can have the amount of faces shown that you are comfortable with, as well as to see those slides clearly. Is that clear? Are those slides clear?

So, I'm just going to do a little bit of a summary of some strategies, but I'm really aware that there's a lot of expertise here in the group. There is 97 of us. Everyone cares about this topic, its really important and a lot of you have used various strategies. So I just like to really encourage you to put in contributions through the chat and I think what we can do perhaps, and I know there's a lot of work I'm being done in other universities and at Deakin. But perhaps this, out of this topic today, we can develop some sort of coherent resources that are the summation of people's ideas here and perhaps that side of things. So please add in your ideas in the chat as we go through.

And I guess I've got my own painful learning experience. I mean, I'm really appreciative that people have been quite humble today, but one of my great learning experiences when I was teaching on a psychology student, was assuming that a student who told me he couldn't present orally must've been ready by week ten. And in front of the class, I asked him to present and he walked out. So that was a really profound learning experience for me that I was making assumptions. And I couldn't do that. I couldn't put someone at risk. And that, those minor things that we might think that just part of normal teaching can actually have a really significant impact on our students. And I guess I've also been involved in really positive learning experiences myself and others where just one thing that one person says has a great impact. I was, I failed history. Or nearly failed history in Year 10. And then won a History Prize as a sort of mature age student studying architecture. And that helped me understand that, the way that you learn, and the way that you teach, can really have a big impact on students progress and how they see their own capacity. And it was somebody that said to me, "Well, you could publish this." about a piece of writing that kind of gave me the confidence to think that I might be able to succeed in higher education in both work and practice. So, I just wanted to frame the conversation with a couple of considerations.

We're going to talk about factors in learning environment and the curriculum, which includes the curriculum in the teaching and all the resources that support students, mental health, factors that are risks. And also, have a think about what, what matters to your students. Some of the research that's being done in Group of 8 hasn't mentioned financial pressures, but we know that our students at Deakin will be significantly affected by financial pressures. In some situations, some students will be more affected by separation from loved ones and feeling isolated. Both through COVID now, but international students and regional students, some students will be very frightened about not passing their course. Terrified to the point where cheating seems like a rational decision. And some students, of course, many, many of us over a lifetime, most of us over our lifetime will experience some kind of mental health issue.

So without getting personal, We'll just talk at, towards the end about strategies to just kind of find out any knowledge a little bit about what students might be experiencing. And I think this is particularly important in the time of COVID where we just have to authentically recognise the kind of challenges we have. Excuse me, i'm a bit nervous. And also balancing your own self care where everyone working in higher ed is under additional pressure, at the moment. So how can we think about supporting our students? But also make sure that the teaching approaches we use to do that aren't going to cost our own mental health and wellbeing so that they're sustainable, they're rewarding to us personally, they engage us authentically and our teaching practice and teaching support practice. And we connect and work with others in doing that.

And I think one thing to start out with is just recognising that learning isn't some fun, easy activity. It's really challenging often we have to challenge ourselves, we have to think, learn to think differently. You have to take risks and show when we don't understand something. We have to give feedback that might be challenging, it might conflict with our own views about ourselves and our ability to succeed in a certain context. And sometimes we experience poor teaching or teaching materials that are confusing. And that means that we have to invest a lot of cognitive effort where it's not really warranted or rewarding. And it involves a lot of hard work over a long period of time. These things are all already challenging, so learning is already challenging.

A couple of factors that have been identified as the risk factors of mental health in the uni wellbeing site, student website and a couple other references. Academic under preparedness, financial strain are a couple of the things that I talked about and also the impact of failure in our greater colleagues including and also Mary, here today, have, have written about the enormous impact of students failing. So it has an enormous impact on, on their self-efficacy. On their other, they are more likely to fail in the future. And unfortunately, most students who are failing, don't seek, necessarily don't seek assistance from the university supports that are there, even though they're very well promoted and very available. So I guess that's one of the reasons why it's important to build into the curriculum, strategies within the learning experiences, and the assessments, and so on themselves. That mean that if your students don't seek support, that they're able to be more likely to succeed.

One of the signs of mental health might be things that kind of triggers us to us as teachers, where we think the student is engaging, is not engaging or is being disrespectful to us. They still, people experiencing mental health issues may have problems with their cognitive processes. So they may find it difficult to engage. They may not look like the concentrating or participating. They might have emotional reactions, or they might participate in kind of withdrawal activities. That just, again, make us think that they're not actually engaging in the learning. So I think that's a really key thing to keep in mind, to not make any assumptions when we see students engage in these kind of behaviors. And of course, at the moment, it's hard to see that because we're learning remotely. I'm going to frame this conversation around three areas that kind of connects to self-determination theory a little bit which some of you may be familiar with and really underpins the uni staff resources. But I've just kind of framed it in more student-centered language because I think one of the problems with the self-determination theory talks about autonomy. And as soon as we told that autonomy, that can lead to thinking about students being able to succeed on their own. So I've framed this in a little bit more student-centered language.

Firstly, that I can progress and succeed. So that's the ability to learn, to engage successfully, in assessment tasks to improve skills, to get feedback that helps you improve. The sense of belonging now this has been talked about by all our panellists today, it's obviously so fundamental. And it includes a lot of things, and I think it's nice to unpack what that means in your discipline, in your context for your students. That, other examples of people like me in the curriculum. This is the fundamental one. When the teacher speaks to me are they including me, are they talking about the groups that I'm part of? Am I connected to others now? I think this is a really powerful one. This is connected to the teacher. As Tiarnan said, does the teacher kind of recognise me as a person, but also connected to others that I'm learning with, connected to others in the discipline. This becomes more and more important as students are coming closer to graduation. But I think this is a big opportunity now with COVID to increase that digital fluency and literacy that our students and staff have, so that we can more easily connect with others in the, that are already practicing in our fields.

And also, I think another time I've heard you speak Tegan you talked about the learning is meaningful. Why am I learning this? And of course, meaningful and relevant will be different for each student. So what does that mean about how we frame our resources? So in terms of progress and success. Often I think the problem with the way we teach, is we see resources and we see assessments as kind of an objective, evidence in time of student's achievement. Rather than an artifact that kind of indicates a human being on a learning journey. And so I think in our language and our assessments in the way that assessments link across the course we frame it as a progressive learning over a period of time. And then its one point in time it's an opportunity to get feedback and to develop your skills rather than this is evidence of a particular mark or type of student, or good student or bad student. That it's safe to fail at some points, not all points throughout the curriculum. And it has to be a point where we say the student can be measured that we know how they going. But there's other points where its safe to fail and there's very few of these in my, in my opinion, in our curriculum where students can actually try something without it being measured, or saying it's important. That there's clarity about what students are expected to do. And I think we're getting pretty good at that, to be honest, but there's still room to improve there, I think a little bit. And that students are involved in setting their own goals, that they have the opportunity to monitor their progress and their developing competence. There's a heap in the literature around good assessment practices. And I think it's useful to think, well, in my course, in my discipline, what does it look like when assessment is supporting student's mental health? When it's still going to achieve the goals of assuring student's ability to progress or graduate. But supports their learning in ways that don't threaten their mental health.

So for example, I think it's been talked about a lot at Deakin and I think it's growing, but still really not universal that we have in say week three or four and early low stakes assessment that give students feedback on their progress. And assessments that I've seen that elements that build up time so you get to practice. Often students are getting assessed the first time they do something like going for your driver's license the first time you get in the car. And also just simple strategies like having lower marks at the start and higher marks towards the end of the series of assessments. And as I said, moving away from a specific focus just on marks to actually focusing on student's development. And that students have the opportunity to think what does success mean for them? Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and also on how students feel, about their learning and their progress. So we know that early feedback reduces stress and increases motivation because it gives a sense of students understanding, that they belong that they can achieve, that they can succeed. That somebody has said, you're going OK. And that we need a balance between identifying students, the gaps in student's performance and the standard that they are achieving. And I think that conversation could be expanded about strength-based approaches where we say, who are you, what are you becoming? What can you bring? What's the combination of skills that's unique that you can bring. That we give students sufficient time to integrate their knowledge with the feedback that we give them and make sense of what that means about how they are going? That the feedback is authentic and meaningful, not about did you perform in the way that I wanted you to in a compliance approach. But this is, this is feedback helping you develop as a person in the way that you need. An also that, as Rola and others have written about dialogic feedback. That the feedback isn't delivered from on high. That is an opinion the student doesn't have the opportunity to address it and to respond to it and use it. But they're actively engaging in evaluating their own progress, giving to others peer feedback, that Joanna Tai has written about as well as others. And generating and using that feedback so that it's a useful thing.

The second topic that we've talked about is belonging and connection. So that can be around working together with other students. But I just wanted to address that because teamwork is often the biggest challenge for students and teachers. I think we do need to think about what it means to authentically engage in teamwork activities. Why are you coming together? Asking students coming together as a team? What does it look like to authentically collaborate in your discipline? We collaborate in the workplace because each team member is bringing something different. And yet often we asked students to all take one task and divide it up. Instead, we need to give students a real purpose for coming together clear complementary roles. They need to learn how to document their progress and be accountable to that and have a team approach to problem-solving issues that can arise. Other strategies are asks students to evaluate each other as team members. And that becomes marks sometimes, I'm really not sure about that. But I think these kind of conversations need to be had across the course teams. And as we've talked about, that students feel included, recognised as people. And that also that, that doesn't mean we have low expectations. That, that the research shows very clearly that we have high expectations for students, even students who've achieved at a low standard, if there's sufficient support, they do better. And there lots of opportunities to contribute and participate.

And any other approach, of course, is to recognise throughout that all of us are going to be affected by mental health issues at some point that learning is stressful, university is stressful, especially at the moment. And to create a culture which students feel safe to acknowledge that or to seek support rather than saying, this is just a small number of people who need help. This is something that is going to be challenging for a lot of people. And I think this is, a lot of the time in the language we make assumptions about students. And it's quite easy to be more inclusive by saying something like some of you will have had a lot of experience in this area and some of you, this is new. That's okay. Just making a simple statement like that at the start of the class, means that students may be more likely to participate and feel they belong.

And the third thing is that learning meaningful and relevant to students. So a lot of the time when we have an assessment tasks that everyone does, I call it breaking up rocks in the prison yard where everyone has to do the same thing. It's already been done before you can look it up on the internet. And it has no meaning or no meaning to the student and has no impact on the world. So I think giving students the opportunity to engage in real tasks that have an impact on the world, solve a problem or that address a question that does exist or that the student is interested. If we did that, we would help students have, you know, that there's purpose and meaning to what they're doing. And just to connect that little bit that the growing sense of competence that students have as students, we need to connect that to their professional identity. And of course, some courses have a particular outcome, professional outcome and some don't. But in any case, I think we do have responsibility to help students understand what it is they can become by the time they graduate? So that course wide approach is pragmatic approaches to assessment, understanding, writing documents that explain what they can do and preparing for the world of work.

MARY DRACUP: Susie, I'm afraid we're nearly out of time.

 SUSIE MACFARLANE: I'm just about to finish Mary. Thankyou.

So as I said, I've got some resources here that talk about self-determination theory, I'll put these slides up on SlideShare. And if anyone wants to, to follow up quite a lot of this kind of strategies to embed these kind of approaches in teaching. And the final point, I just wanted to make is to see how well we can have a bit of an understanding of ourselves as students. Bernie Murphy in the world when we had face-to-face teaching with just gets students to leave anonymous post-it notes at the end of the desk as they left the classroom each week saying how they are going. And now online we've got polling tools like *Mentimeter* and *Padlet*. What are the challenges they're facing so that we actually are having a dialogue with our students. And we can also ask them to deal with this in their assessment tasks reflecting on the challenges they're facing. So that actually becomes part of the authentic journey as a, as a student. Alright. And the last question is, what does, what does this mean for you and your work with course teams. What would help your staff feel more confident to support students mental health? I work in a team in the Faculty of Health, but there's pods across all four faculties. And we're very connected to central DLF teams as well. Course directors and associate heads of schools are, I guess I'm happy, to keep part of the conversation around these things. Thanks, Lisa.

LISA HANNA: Thanks so much Susie, and for sharing such, such concrete and practical strategies for educators and learning designers, particularly around assessment and feedback and creating that space for students that optimises wellbeing. Some really insight, great insights there.

Now we've got two minutes left, folks, so we probably don't have time, unfortunately, for the type of panel discussion that I think we had originally anticipated. But that's fine from my perspective because it's been such a rich discussion and I think that we are such, it's been so rich hearing from the range of presenters that we've had here today. There are a few things I'd like to say.

The first is that the recording for this session will be available to everyone who's registered subsequently. And the second is that Mary has posted in the chat a link to the *Mentimeter* slides, where it would be really great if anyone who has got particular insights or experiences of good practice in, in working with students to support and promote positive mental health and curriculum design or any other area. If you can share those there. There's been plenty of activity in chat where people have been sharing their own experiences and comments and summaries and responses and so on. And Karen has answered a couple of your questions already about people joining the, the practice group. And I think what we will do subsequently is also I think Mary, look through the comments, see if there's any questions, particularly not been answered and maybe follow-up with anyone posing them.

But I'd also like to thank give a very, very warm thank you to all of our panel members today. So Karen, Tiarnan, Sally, Tegan and Susie all of who chaired some incredibly values, valuable perspectives. And thank you to all of you who've attended. Thanks for all the questions and comments. And I think this has been an incredibly enriching and, and, and rich session for all of us.

I'd also finally like to thank Mary Dracup who has been the architect of this entire workshop and has, all of the glory is Mary's in terms of pulling together the panel and creating this session that has been so productive. I'm sorry that we didn't get to more of a collective panel discussion, but I'm sure that this is the prompt to many subsequent discussions both in small groups, on larger groups and course teams. So thank you all again for attending. And you will receive a link to the recording in the next few days. I think Mary?

MARY DRACUP: Sorry. Thank you so much, Lisa. Really lovely job of moderating and thank you everyone for staying on if you really great chat, questions and comments as well, and particularly to the panel, you've been brilliant. This has been really helpful. Thank you. Thanks everyone. I look forward to reconnecting with everyone over the forthcoming weeks. Cheers.