Student Mental Health and Well-being Policy

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Applicable to Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

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This policy on Mental Health and Well-being applies to all Undergraduate and Postgraduate students of Azim Premji University, Bengaluru campus, including students with disabilities, from marginalized communities, and students identifying as LGBTQIA+.

1. Mental Health Support

1.1. As per UGC guidelines on Mental Health and Well-being for Higher Education Institutions, Azim Premji University is committed to facilitating students in maintaining emotional, psychological, social, and physical wellbeing, while fostering resilience, help-seeking behaviour, and a safe campus environment.

1.2 Mental Health Practitioners in the University sees mental health as a continuum model, proposed by Coel Keys (2002), i.e. mental health is more than the absence of mental illness, but is a positive phenomenon encompassing emotional, psychological and social elements, along with the states of languishing and flourishing intersecting with mental illness.

1.3 University follows a tri-component approach to mental health support, including:

1.3.1. Promotion of mental health and well-being through orientations, awareness building sessions, etc.

1.3.2. Prevention of mental health challenges through capacity building sessions.

1.3.3. Interventions for mental health concerns and psychological distress through

individual counselling services and support groups, referral for psychiatrist consultations, etc.

1.4. The term mental health concerns or challenges ranges from temporary acute reactions to an event, stress or external pressure or to long-term psychiatric conditions which may have significant effects on an individual's functioning.

1.5. Students experiencing emotional, personal, academic, or mental health challenges are encouraged to seek support through the University's counselling centre, *Conversations*, where qualified counsellors provide a safe, confidential, and supportive space to talk. Students may also access online counselling support through Your Dost platform.

1.6 Services are structured to accommodate students' academic schedules, including the availability of walk-in support where possible. Support is also offered in multiple languages, including Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, and others, to make counselling more accessible and inclusive. In addition, mental health screening and triage processes are in place to help students receive timely and appropriate support based on their individual needs.

1.7. In situations where a student may benefit from more specialised or intensive mental health care — such as psychiatric consultation, medication support, or hospital-based care — the University's counselling centre, *Conversations*, will assist the student with guidance, referrals, and need based coordination of appropriate external support services. These may include institutions such as St. John's Medical College Hospital and National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS). A general list of external mental health service providers is available with the *Conversations* counselling centre and is also appended to this policy for easy reference.

1.8. The University may seek an independent psychological and / or psychiatric evaluation in high-risk cases where there are concerns of a student's wellbeing and / or concerns for the wellbeing of other members of the University. This process will be approached with sensitivity, care, and with the student's best interests in mind.

1.9 Where a student's mental health and wellbeing require focused care, recovery time, or a higher level of support than can reasonably be provided alongside academic participation, the University may advise the student to take a temporary pause or break from their studies. The aim of such a measure is to prioritise the student's health, safety, and long-term wellbeing while enabling them to return to their studies when appropriate support and professional guidance indicate that they are ready to do so.

1.10. In certain cases, the University's Disciplinary Committee or other Committees may recommend counselling sessions in the interest of the student's wellbeing and development. In such situations, participation in the recommended counselling process may be considered a compulsory supportive measure aimed at promoting the student's welfare and facilitating the continuation of their academic journey in the University.

2. Mental Health Reasonable Accommodation (MHRA)support

2.1. Mental Health Reasonable Accommodation refers to short-term and temporary relaxation of academic requirements such as extension in assignment deadlines, leave policy, etc.

2.2. The University strives to ensure that students with identified mental health challenges receive reasonable support in completing their academic studies. Students with specific mental health challenges may apply for MHRA through the Programme Coordinator and the Office of Disability and Inclusion office. MHRA are available based on written recommendation (note) provided by either the University's counselling centre or external qualified medical practitioners.

For more information, students should refer to the Reasonable Accommodations policy available at the Registrar's Office Website.

3. Confidentiality

3.1. The University recognises confidentiality as central to effective mental healthcare and shall make all reasonable efforts to protect student privacy. Information about the name of the students seeking counselling support, the nature of mental health challenge and treatment will not be revealed by the counselling centre, except for the following cases:

3.1.1. Counsellors who are providing support, their supervisor and the Head of the Counselling Centre will have access to necessary details for the purpose of providing care.

3.1.2. In cases where students need academic accommodations, they will need to provide detailed information to the Office of Disability and Inclusion. For actioning the recommendation of the Office of Disability and Inclusion, limited information will be shared with the Programme Office, Programme Coordinator, Director or Associate Director. Faculty members who are expected to relax academic requirements in their course (e.g. extend deadline for an assignment), will be informed by the Office of Disability Inclusion or the Programme Coordinator of the nature of academic accommodation approved, but not the details of the mental health challenge and support.

3.1.3. In accordance with the Mental Healthcare Act 2017, confidentiality may be breached in exceptional circumstances, such as cases where there is risk of potential self-harm, suicidal ideation or harm to others. In such cases, the Conversations team may contact the student's emergency contact person, family members or someone in a position to prevent the potential harm, revealing only necessary information. Students will be informed about breach of confidentiality. Relevant

authorities in the University will also be informed in order to coordinate protocols related to self-harm care, academics and arrangements in student residences. Depending on the circumstances, this may include the Programme Coordinator, School Director or Associate Director, Programme Office, Faculty Mentor, Resident Mentor, Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Student Affairs Convenor and Vice Chancellor or other designated individuals. Every care will be taken to ensure that only minimal information required for taking suitable action is revealed.

3.2. Students seeking mental health support are expected to maintain confidentiality and not share private details on social media or other public fora.

4. Mental Health Crisis Protocols

4.1 Azim Premji University follows a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders such as mental health professionals, residences team, medical team, academic mentors, administration team, etc to provide prompt and holistic support to ensure the safety of students in the times of mental health crisis.

4.2 The University periodically conducts capacity-building and sensitisation programmes for members of the University community to help ensure compassionate, sensitive, and appropriate responses to students while handling mental health crises.

4.3 In the case of need of hospitalization arising due to any mental health crisis, hospitalization support is assisted.

4.4 Azim Premji University's group medical insurance for students (available to all full-time students) covers the cost of psychiatric consultations and hospitalization arising out of psychiatric ailments. For more details, please refer to medical insurance policy.

5. Anti-discrimination

5.1. Azim Premji University is committed towards fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Upholding the values and the spirit of the Indian constitution are central to the University's educational goals and practices.

5.2. Mental health support provided by the University is available to all students, regardless of gender (including LGBTQIA+), disability, caste, ethnicity, religion, and any other marginalized socio-economic backgrounds. The University recognizes that any discrimination based on any of these factors goes against the values of Azim Premji University.

6. Appendix: Mental Health Referrals

The following list of referrals is provided only to assist students in identifying suitable external resources. The University does not endorse the services provided by these referrals. Students are advised to exercise caution and suitable discretion when using such referrals. The University assumes no responsibility or liability for any outcomes resulting from its use. Students are encouraged to get the latest list from the Counselling Centre.

External Referrals:

Name of Psychiatrist/ Psychologist	Organisation	Website/Phone number	City	Specialisations
Multiple Psychiatrists and Psychologists	St. John's Hospital	080 2206 5000	Bengaluru	Medications, Assessments, Hospitalization
Multiple Psychiatrists and Psychologists	NIMHANS Hospital	080 2699 5000	Bengaluru	Medications, Assessments, Therapy Support, Hospitalizations
Dr Samarth Shetty	Manipal Hospital, Sarjapur Road	Call hospital for appointment at 080 66756565	Bengaluru	Medications
Dr Prerna Maheshwari	Manipal Hospital, Sarjapur Road	Call hospital for appointment at 080 66756565	Bengaluru	Medications
Multiple psychologists and Psychiatrists	The Green Oak Initiative	https://thegreenoakinitiative.com/services/	Bengaluru	Medications, Assessments, Therapy
Multiple psychologists and Psychiatrists	Hear it Out	https://heartitout.in/	Bengaluru	Medication, Assessments, Therapy
Multiple psychologists	Pause for Perspective	pause.perspective@gmail.com +91-9490708947, +91-8106864001	Hyderabad	Therapy Support
Multiple psychologists and Psychiatrists	Sangath	https://sangath.in/	Goa	Medications, Assessments, Therapy
Dr. Annie Mathew	Inara Collective	https://www.inaracollective.in/	Bengaluru	Medication, ADHD, autism
Multiple Psychologist	Therapeute	http://therapeute.in	Online	Assessments

Hospitalisation

City	Hospital	Contact information
Bengaluru	St. John's Hospital	080 2206 5000
Bengaluru	NIMHANS Hospital	080 2699 5000
Bengaluru	Manipal Hospital, Sarjapur Road	080-2222 1111