Taking a systems approach to staff capability building
Partnering with educators to recognise and respond to students in distress

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Acknowledgement of country

Wominjeka

RMIT University acknowledges the traditional owners of the land and respectfully recognises Elders both past and present.
RMIT University

• RMIT is a global University of design, technology and enterprise, with more than 84,000 students and 10,000 teachers and staff.

• RMIT offers both Higher Education and Vocational Education.
RMIT taking action

Tone from the top
✓ Academic Board and Vice-Chancellor Endorsement
✓ Mental wellbeing as organisational priority
✓ Whole of enterprise implementation of the Framework

Strategic approach
✓ Cross university Student Mental Wellbeing Advisory Group
✓ Government funding to support focus on Vocational Education
✓ Evidence informed, strengths-based and collaborative
✓ Executive support and specialised project team (2.6 FTE)

Implementation road map
✓ Aligned with RMIT vision, focus areas and the Framework
✓ Designed to reduce organisational risk, maximise student outcomes / experience and build sustainability
Student Mental Wellbeing at RMIT

Understanding the problem we are trying to solve and co-designing to build innovative solutions
Staff capability building

Traditional mental health training
(2 Days)

VS

Embedded mental health training
(Blended options 20 mins- 3 hrs)
Engagement and co-design

Leadership

Organisational priority

Staff champions

Specialist team

Support Service Areas

Project Funding

Cohort readiness/need

Existing support systems
Hearing the experience of teachers...

Dealing with distressed students is a regular situation for myself and my team.

Teachers are in the front line and often are most aware of changes in their students behaviour.

Teaching staff have felt unsupported when a student needs urgent assistance.

Pressure to meet targets, provide timely feedback, engage the students... impacts upon what can be delivered.

There is also a blurry line between providing support and students taking some personal responsibility for their own learning choices.
Systems approach

Blended Professional Development Program
• PD embedded in setting context
• Finding a new place for traditional mental health training

Streamlined pathways to support
• Removing barriers to support for staff and students
• Enhancing triage point

Targeted resources
• Providing practical resources to reinforce timely action and access to system supports in the moment
**Distress Continuum**

**Healthy Functioning**
- Normal mood fluctuations
- Takes things in stride
- Good energy levels
- Consistent performance
- Normal sleep patterns
- Physically and socially active
- Comfortable with others

**Common Distress**
- Irritable, impatient or restless
- Nervous or worried
- Sad or tearful
- Procrastination
- Trouble sleeping
- Lowered energy or
- Tense and on edge
- Less socially active

**Significant Distress**
- Excessive anger, anxiety and irritability
- Prolonged sadness or feelings of emptiness
- Loss of enjoyment in activities
- High levels of self-criticism and feelings of worthlessness
- Significantly disturbed sleep
- Desire to avoid social situations
- Problems paying attention
- Hard to control drug or alcohol use
- Decreased performance in study/work

**Severe Distress**
- Bursts of aggression and anger
- Excessive anxiety and panic attacks
- Severely depressed mood
- Feeling completely overwhelmed
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Constant fatigue and lack of energy
- Poor self-care or hygiene
- Loss of contact with reality
- Significant disturbances in thinking
- Urges to self-harm or actual self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviour
Response Protocols

Information to guide staff actions and support pathways when assisting students

- Transdiagnostic
- Staff level of concern
- Response protocols aligned with RMIT context
- Clear role boundaries and supports
- Practise examples to build staff capability and confidence
1. Blended Professional Development Program

Adopting transdiagnostic recognition and response protocols embedded within the RMIT context
Blended Professional Development Program (embedded in context)

Online Course
- Essentials Course
  - 20 mins
  - 1: Student distress & your role
  - 2: Responding to student distress
  - 3: Looking after yourself

Webinars
- Enhancing student mental health
  - TBC mins
  - *In Development, role out in 2019

- Topic based panel discussion
  - 60 mins
  - 1: Looking after self when assisting students
  - 2: How to respond when concerned

Workshops
- Seminar
  - 60 mins
  - 1: Understanding student mental health
  - *Role out in 2019

- Skills development
  - 180 mins
  - 1: Responding to students in distress
  - 2: Leading for mental wellbeing at RMIT

Mental Health First Aid
- 2 days
- Nominated staff (OHSW role)
Online course

RMIT Protocols for assisting distressed students: Essential Course

- Developed for RMIT context
- Student and staff voice throughout
- Clear protocols and information
- Essential content only (20 mins to complete)
- Designed for accessibility and engagement
- Sustainable and scalable
- Links through to further professional development
Webinars and workshops

2018 Wellbeing Webinar Topics
1. Looking after yourself when supporting students
2. What to do when you’re concerned about a student’s wellbeing
3. Responding to concerns about suicide

Leading for Mental Wellbeing Workshops
• Designed for Program Managers

Leading for Mental Wellbeing Workshops
100% of participants more confident to respond to distressed students
n= 49
2. Streamlined pathways to support

System reform in streamlining pathways to support for students when facilitated by staff
Staff Line for urgent student support

The **Staff Line** is a place for RMIT staff to contact when they hold serious concerns about a student’s welfare or wellbeing and require timely assistance.

Trained RMIT staff respond and assist by:

- assessing the situation
- referring to internal and/or external services
- provide practical support and advice to staff managing the situation

The Staff Line is available 9am to 5pm and directs to after hours supports outside these times.

RMIT Staff Line

9925 1111

urgent.studentsupport@rmit.edu.au
RMIT Staff Line for urgent student support – overview

RMIT Staff member requires urgent support in responding to student distress

Staff Line Intake (Ph x51111)

Nature of request assessed by:
- Type of issue
- Urgency of issue

Connected to appropriate Service(s)

- Emergency (000)
- RMIT Urgent Security

Not urgent
- Information about Support Services provided.
- Guidance in how to make standard referral.

Entry criteria

- Safer Community
- Counselling Service Duty Worker
- Equitable Learning Service
- Student Support

Case collaboration
3. Targeted Resources

Reinforcing staff action outside of the training environment
Quick reference card

Information staff need in the moment

- Response protocols for urgent support
- Clear contacts numbers
- Action guide to assist distressed students (high-level)
- Links to further information
Supporting digital content

Online information and videos as a point of reference

- Content framed around the context of learning and teaching
- Support Service information
- Curated lists of links to resources and professional development
Summary

1. Understand the problem

2. Leadership support and co-design

3. Systems approach to staff capability building
Thank you

Contact us

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