Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing

Oranga Tauira | Student Wellbeing Plan

Oranga Tauira | Student Wellbeing Plan

"A wellbeing approach can be described as enabling people to have the capabilities they need to live lives of purpose, balance, and meaning for them."

– Te Tai Ōhanga | The Treasury NZ

The purpose of the **Oranga Tauira | Student Wellbeing Plan** is to create the culture and conditions that enhance health and wellbeing for students, utilising a systemic and campus- wide approach.

Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing marks a shift in the University's approach to student wellbeing. It adopts both a health promotion and health education approach. Firstly, by focussing on the causes of stressors and how to minimise or eliminate these. Secondly, on empowering students to improve self and community care, through increasing their knowledge and positively influencing their attitudes and behaviours.

There is a strong and expanding evidence base indicating that university students are a 'very high risk population' for psychological distress, and that the prevalence and severity of this distress is growing across student populations. This is due to a range of factors, including such things as transitioning into adulthood and being more independent, living away from home, being in a new environment, the pressures of tertiary level study, financial strains, balancing busy lives including study, work, relationships and so on. More than ever before, students are accessing health, counselling and disability services, and are increasingly accessing compassionate consideration for academic assessments and exams, as well as increased demand for forms of financial aid and other personal support structures within the University.

The University has made a commitment to deliver a Student Wellbeing Plan that aims to intervene before problems arise. This involves not only equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to flourish in the university environment and beyond, but to ensure that the environment itself is optimised for student wellbeing. Understanding the importance of wellbeing will help students to adapt and flourish when faced with the unprecedented challenges, technological advances and unimagined careers of the future.
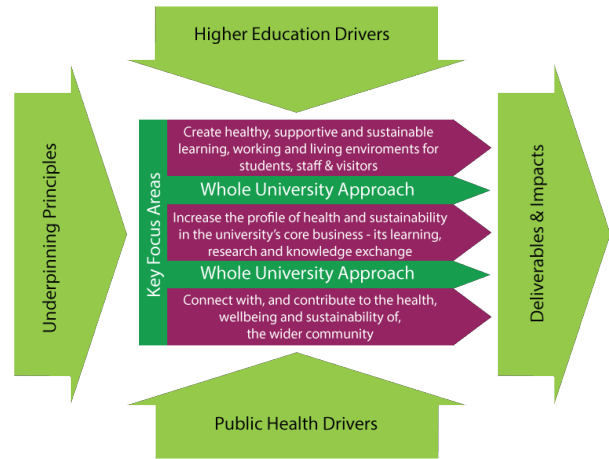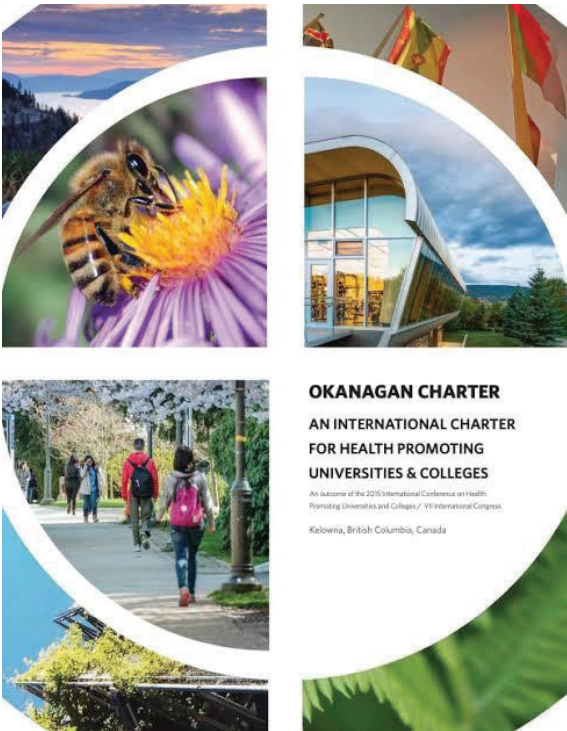
Sector Best Practice

There are a range of internationally endorsed higher education wellbeing and health promoting models that have informed Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing.

The Okanagan Charter (2015) highlights the unique role for higher education settings in enhancing the health of citizens and communities both now and in the future. The Charter has two Calls to Action for higher education institutions:

1. Embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates.

2. Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally

Key principles that underpin the Calls to Action outlined in the Charter include using a whole systems approach, ensuring a campus-wide approach, engaging the student voice and building on strengths.


OKANAGAN CHARTER

AN INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTING UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

An outcome of the 2015 International Conference on Health Promoting Universities and Colleges / VII International Congress

Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

Healthy Universities UK, following on from the vision and aims of the Okanagan Charter, developed a model for conceptualising and applying a whole university approach. The model demonstrates how underpinning values such as partnership, participation and equity meet with public health and higher education drivers to inform and deliver on their key focus areas.

Further, the **Australian Framework for Enhancing Student Mental Wellbeing** again focuses on a whole-of-university approach in promoting student wellbeing. The framework consists of 5 main action areas:

3. Foster engaging curricula and learning experiences

4. Cultivate supportive social, physical and digital environments

5. Strengthen community awareness and actions

6. Develop students' mental health knowledge and self-regulatory skills

7. Ensure access to effective services
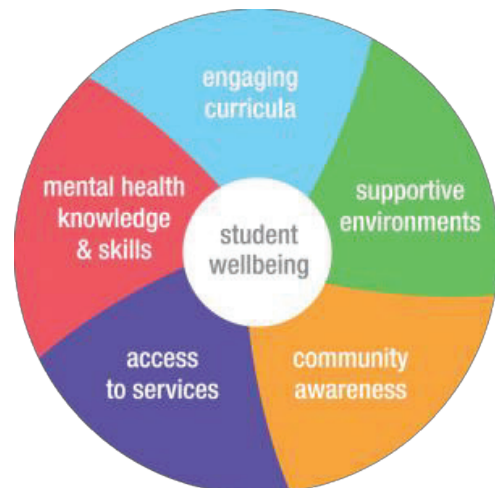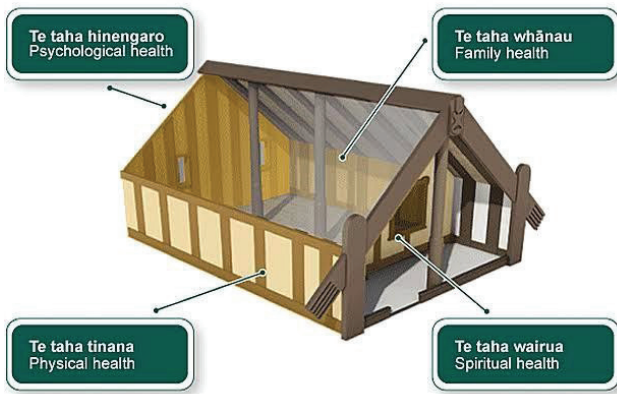
Te whare tapa whā' (Mason Durie, 1982), with its strong foundations and four equal sides, the symbol of the wharenui illustrates the four dimensions of Māori well-being: Taha tinana (physical health), Taha wairua (Spiritual health), Taha whānau (family health) and Taha hinengaro (mental health). Just as each corner of the house must be strong and balanced to hold its structure, each dimension of well-being must be balanced for health to exist.

Te Pae Mahutonga (Southern Cross Star Constellation) brings together elements of modern health promotion. The four central stars of the Southern Cross represents four key tasks of health promotion: Mauiroa (cultural identity), Waiora (physical environment), Toiora (healthy lifestyles), Te Oranga (participation in society). The two pointers represent Ngā Manukura (community leadership) and Te Mana Whakahaere (autonomy).

The way the Student Wellbeing Team operates

The University is a large environment with many activities occurring already that support student wellbeing. The Student Wellbeing Team are responsible for delivering the Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing Plan, which is firmly focussed on proactive and preventative measures, placing greater emphasis on identifying the causes of problems and tackling those to mitigate and prevent harm from occurring later on. This is distinct from other services in the University which are typically reactive, responding to distress once it appears (eg Counselling, Proctor).

As the sector best practice verifies, a whole-of-university approach must be adopted to truly create a health promoting, wellbeing focussed university environment. Therefore, wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone in our community.

The Student Wellbeing Team contributes by delivering this Plan and programme of work with their expertise and resources.

The role of the Student Wellbeing Team in delivery of the Plan is to:

1. Be the expert voice on creating the conditions for student wellbeing through health promotion expertise and through engagement with students

2. Inform and influence others with responsibility for areas and programmes that contribute to student wellbeing

3. Bring key stakeholders together to identify, plan and respond to student wellbeing issues

4. Highlight best practice to the university community

5. Train and educate students on proactive and preventative skills and strategies to improve their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others

6. Lead coordination of student wellbeing activities and communication campaigns.

A whole-of-university approach must be adopted to truly create a health promoting, wellbeing focussed university environment.

Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing has three **goal areas:**

Using a holistic combination of all three areas ensures our goals represent a social-ecological health promotion approach.

1. **Minimise Stressors**

   Stressors are factors that activate a stress response in your body. University students are exposed to a wide range of stressors, some of which we can minimise or eliminate. This stream of work focusses on identifying the stressors in student life, understanding what causes the stressor, and actively working to minimise or eliminate these where possible.

2. **Strengthen Raukaha | Capacity**

   As individuals, and as a University community, we have varying tools and strategies to adapt in the face of challenge whilst maintaining a stable mental wellbeing. This stream of work focuses on building and strengthening community capacity; helping students to develop tools and strategies to effectively manage times of challenge.

3. **Increase Feel-Good Factors**

   Feel-good factors create positive feelings in our bodies through triggering release of hormones which make us feel good. Exposure to feel-good factors increase our mood, which can help overcome stress and help our students when they are faced with the challenges of University life. We can improve our environment, our promotions and the activities we deliver through the intentional use of feel-good factors.

Using a holistic combination of all three areas ensures our goals represent a social-ecological health promotion approach.
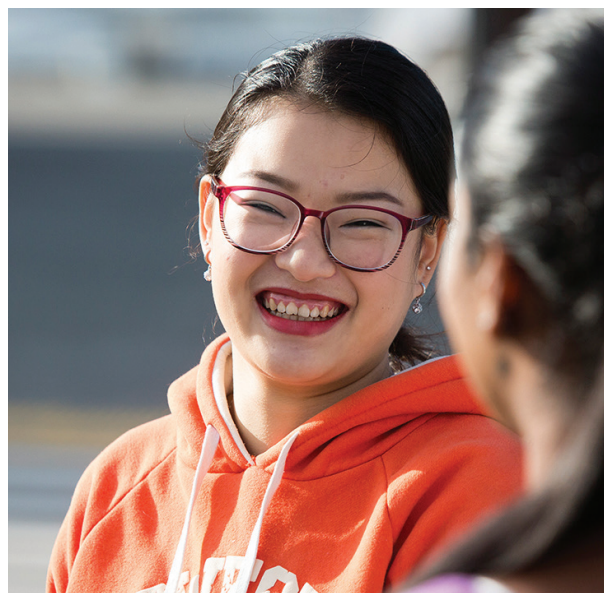
Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing **will achieve these goals via three action areas:**

· **Education and promotions** – direct training and education, plus information and resources provided to students and staff, which increase wellbeing awareness and knowledge, with the aim of positively influencing behaviour change and attitudes.

· **The campus environment** – understanding how students experience the campus environment (including spaces, amenities, and infrastructure on campus) from a wellbeing perspective and recommending improvements based on student feedback and best practice. Ensuring the environments our students live, work and play in promote health, wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

· **The academic environment** – understanding how students experience the academic environment from a wellbeing perspective and recommending improvements based on student feedback and best practice. Making it easy to implement measures that enhance wellbeing in the academic environment.

In addition to its goals and action areas, *Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing* has a number of **priority areas** that are key areas of concerns for students. These areas will be the initial focus of the strategy, however these may change over time as the strategy evolves and the needs of the student community change.

These priority areas are based on student feedback about what is important to them and the student community:

· Mental Health

· Financial Wellbeing

· Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

· Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination (including Everyday Racism)

The goals, action areas and priority areas combine to form a matrix that will guide the delivery of the strategy, ensuring that the activities that are conducted deliver on the goals of the strategy – to reduce stressors, strengthen individual and community capacity and increase feel-good factors. The activities within the matrix will change over time as projects are completed or as new priorities arise. An example of the matrix is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Example programme of work addressing goal, action and priority areas (as at July 2019)

Student Wellbeing Matrix	Education & Promotion	Campus Environment	Academic Environment
Minimise Stressors	Wellbeing @ Orientation Sexual Harm & Consent Financial Stress	Wellbeing Guide to Campus Physical Space Positive Signage Water on Campus Period Poverty	Academic Wellbeing Champions Wellbeing in the Classroom
Strengthen Capacity	Self-Help One-Stop-Shop Peer Health Promotors Programme Student Leaders BHD & Sexual Harm Training	Active Bystander Student Groups BHD & Sexual Harm	Lecture Theatre Promotions Exam Partnerships
Increase Feel-Good Factors	Be Well Website Contributions to a Healthy Campus Campaigns (eg University Mental Health Day, Stress Less Weeks)	Colour, Vibrancy, Humour on Campus Kate Edgar Building & General Library Partnership Projects	Wellbeing Teaching Awards Best Practice Contributions

Staying on the right track

To measure the ongoing performance and progress of Creating the Conditions for Wellbeing, a number of tools will be utilised:

Measuring output

This can provide both qualitative and quantitative data and help produce annual performance reports. Examples of output measures include collecting website and email analytics, engagement with activities, types of trainings delivered, number of students trained, number of campaigns.

Contribution to University KPIs

Longer term, with improved student wellbeing being embedded into the culture of the University, we can expect to contribute to the University's Key Performance Indicators, such as student retention, student overall experience satisfaction and sense of belonging.

As part of this strategy, we need to consider other tools that on a population and strategic level enables us to track the wellbeing of the student population. This may include the development of a student survey tool and/or the Healthy University Self-Review Tool.

Terminology

Wellbeing
The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as a state in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.

Hauora/Health
The World Health Organisation defines Health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Health Promotion
The Ottowa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) defines health promotion as the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. To reach a state of complete physical mental and social wellbeing, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realise aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is therefore seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector, but goes beyond healthy lifestyles to wellbeing.

Health Education
The World Health Organisation defines Health Education as any combination of learning experiences designed to help individuals and communities improve their health by increasing their knowledge or influencing their attitudes.

Sexual Assault & Sexual Harassment
'Safe to talk' is a sexual harm helpline and defines sexual harm as when someone has a sexual experience they don't want, or are forced into any kind of sexual act by another person. It can happen in lots of different ways and the effects of sexual harm are different for everyone.

Financial Wellbeing
Financial hardship is when you are not able to meet your financial obligations for a period of time. At university this can impact upon not having the money to be able to pay for transport costs, to make it to classes, and/or struggling to financially afford food.