

PLAKSHA UNIVERSITY

Mental Health Policy



Mental Health Policy, 2025 for Plaksha University

Preamble

This Mental Health Policy is prepared in compliance with the Supreme Court of India's landmark ruling in July 2025, which issued comprehensive guidelines to safeguard the mental health of students and employees in educational institutions, including Universities. The ruling recognizes mental health as an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and mandates the adoption of uniform, enforceable policies to prevent suicides and promote well-being. This policy draws from the UMMEED Draft Guidelines, MANODARPAN initiative, and the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, as directed by the Court. It applies to all students and employees of Plaksha University and will be reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness and alignment with evolving legal and health standards.

Purpose

The primary objective of this policy is to create a supportive, inclusive, and stigma-free environment that prioritizes mental health, prevents distress, and provides timely interventions. By implementing these measures, the University aims to reduce academic pressure, work pressure, foster resilience, and ensure access to professional support, thereby enhancing overall well-being.

Scope

This policy covers all University campuses, hostels, online platforms, and affiliated activities. It encompasses undergraduate, postgraduate, and research students, as well as employees, including faculty and non-teaching staff. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, including those from marginalized backgrounds (SC, ST, OBC, EWS), LGBTQ+ communities, students with disabilities, and those experiencing trauma or bereavement.

Key Components and Guidelines

1. Adoption of Uniform Mental Health Policy

The University shall adopt this policy as its uniform framework for mental health, aligned with national guidelines. It will be publicly accessible on the University website, student portals and via QR codes on notice boards. Annual reviews will incorporate feedback from stakeholders and updates from regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC).

2. Counselling and Support Services

To ensure accessible and personalized support, the University will:

- Appoint at least one full-time qualified counsellor, psychologist, or social worker for every 500 students, with specialized training in adolescent and young adult mental health.
- Establish formal referral linkages with external mental health professionals, such as mental health platforms, local hospitals or NGOs.
- Assign dedicated faculty/executive mentors to small student batches, who will be able to guide them in general and during high-stress periods like examinations, admissions, and transitions. Confidential drop-in sessions and informal check-ins will be scheduled regularly.
- Employees have access to the counselling services provided by the University.

3. Avoidance of Harmful Practices

The University prohibits practices that exacerbate stress, such as segregating students by academic performance, public shaming, or imposing unrealistic academic targets. Student performances are displayed through a learning management system, where each student has access only to their individual performances. Faculty will be apprised to promote equitable treatment, and coursework will be periodically reviewed to align with students' capacities.

The University has a code of conduct for employees and for students, and upholds an environment free from discrimination and harassment.

4. Establishment of Referral Protocols

A written protocol for immediate referrals will be implemented, including linkages to suicide prevention helplines (e.g., Tele-MANAS: 14416) and local mental health services. Helpline numbers and emergency contacts will be prominently displayed in notice boards, hostels, libraries, and digital platforms. In cases of crisis, the University will facilitate transport and accompaniment to professional care.

5. Mandatory Staff Training

All employees will undergo mandatory training twice a year on:

- **Psychological First Aid:** Identifying warning signs of distress (e.g., withdrawal, anxiety) and responding appropriately to self-harm.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** Emphasizing sensitive engagement with diverse student populations, including cultural competence for marginalized groups, trauma-informed care, and anti-discrimination practices.

6. Mechanisms for Reporting and Redressal

The University has committees for confidential reporting of incidents like harassment, ragging, bullying or sexual assault; e.g. Anti-Ragging Committee, Internal Complaints Committee for Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH), Committee for Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), Grievance Redressal Committee, Student Grievance Redressal Committee, Committee for Prevention of caste-based discrimination, Ethics Committee. These Committees will handle the appropriate cases promptly, providing social support to victims and enforcing zero-tolerance policies.

7. Sensitization Programs for Parents and Guardians

Regular workshops and webinars will be organized for parents on mental health literacy, recognizing distress signs, and reducing academic pressure. These will be integrated into orientation programs, with resources like pamphlets and online modules provided to promote family involvement in student well-being.

Orientation is done for the employees as part of the induction schedule.

8. Maintenance of Annual Reports

The University will maintain anonymized records of mental health interventions, referrals, and training sessions. An annual report will be prepared and submitted to the UGC and State Education Department, detailing outcomes, challenges, and improvements.

9. Provision of Career Counselling Services

Structured career counselling will be offered regularly by qualified professionals, focusing on diverse pathways, skill-building, and realistic goal-setting. Sessions for parents will address expectations, with special emphasis on inclusive counselling for underrepresented groups.

10. Promotion of Holistic Well-being

To foster holistic development, the University will:

- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, yoga, arts, clubs, and community service.
- Encourage employees to actively participate in events and actively drive learning culture (through events like co-learning series, Plaksha people collective).

- Encourage students and employees to create a good University culture through the CREATE values: Curious, Rigorous, Enterprising, Authentic, Thankful and Exemplary.
- Review examination patterns to incorporate continuous assessment, reducing reliance on high-stakes tests and promoting a balanced identity beyond academics.

11. Ensuring Safe Residential Environments

Hostels and campuses will be maintained as safe spaces, free from harassment, bullying, and substance abuse.

12. Residential Safety:

Regular audits and resident welfare officers will enforce safety protocols. Places like building rooftops in academic blocks and in hostels, and in any high-risk areas will have restricted access to prevent impulsive self-harm.

13. Heightened Protections for High-Stress Contexts

While students approach their exams, or during their placement period, or undergoing research pressures, or when employees go through a high workload or high-pressure period, additional support like peer mentoring, stress management workshops, and psychological monitoring shall be provided on a case-by-case basis. Accountability mechanisms will track compliance and address any lapses.

14. Implementation and Monitoring

- **Responsible Body:** The Student Well-Being Committee, which also includes aspects related to Mental Health, comprising counsellors, faculty representatives, student leaders, and experts, will oversee implementation.
- **Resources:** The university will allocate a dedicated budget for mental health services, training, and infrastructure.
- **Monitoring:** Regular surveys, feedback mechanisms, and audits will evaluate policy effectiveness. Violations will trigger corrective actions.
- **Crisis Response:** A 24/7 medical helpline (+91 9875990801) is provided, which will handle/allocate emergencies depending on the context.

15. Communication

- This Policy will be disseminated to all internal and external stakeholders by placing it on the University website.
- This policy shall be reviewed and updated annually and will be made publicly accessible through the University website and notice boards.

16. Review and Amendments

This policy will be reviewed annually or as directed by the Supreme Court or regulatory authorities. Amendments will be made based on stakeholder input, emerging research, and national guidelines to ensure ongoing relevance.

By adopting this policy, Plaksha University commits to nurturing not just academic excellence but the holistic well-being of its community, in line with the Supreme Court's vision for a mentally healthy educational landscape.

Composition of the Well-being Committee

At Plaksha University, well-being is a shared institutional priority aimed at nurturing a healthy, supportive, and thriving community. To ensure focused attention on student well-being and related matters, the Student Well-being Committee has been constituted. In line with the Supreme Court of India's 2025 guidelines and UGC recommendations, the committee adopts a multi-sectoral approach, led by clear leadership and featuring diverse representation, to coordinate and address mental health and well-being concerns across the university.

Student well-being remains the core focus of the committee. A representative from HR will also be included to contribute insights on employee well-being and further strengthen Plaksha's overall culture of well-being.

The composition of the committee is given below:

Student Well-Being Committee:

Dean or Associate Dean, Student Affairs or a faculty member	Chairperson
Two to four Faculty members	Members
HR Representative	Member
One Counsellor	Member
One representative from the Career Office	Member
One representative from Student Life	Member
One to two student-facing representatives, like teaching fellows, instructional managers	Member
Academic Administrative Officer	Convener
Student representatives (UG and Doctoral students)	Case-to-Case Basis

Frequency, Tenure & Quorum of the Committee:

- The tenure of the Committee shall be 1 year from the date of notification.
- The Committee shall meet once every fortnight.
- The quorum for meetings shall be two-thirds (2/3) of the total members.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Committee:

The Committees will be responsible for implementing and overseeing the Mental Health Policy for students and employees, including:

- Assigning dedicated mentors to student batches.
- Enforcing the prohibition of harmful practices like academic segregation and public shaming.
- Establishing and promoting referral protocols for mental health services:
- Organizing mandatory training sessions for staff on psychological first aid and inclusive engagement.
- Ensuring confidential redressal mechanisms for harassment, bullying, and assault.
- Conducting sensitization programs for parents and students
- Maintaining anonymized records and preparing an Annual Report for regulatory bodies.
- Promoting extracurricular activities and reviewing examination patterns to reduce stress.
- Ensuring the safety of residential environments and installing preventative safety devices where needed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. L. Singh'.

