



Mental Health Conditions

Key support actions

- Be clear on deadlines and course requirements
- Maintain open communication and provide clear feedback to student, avoiding harsh criticism as far as possible
- Summarise at the end of meetings / discussions
- Keep in touch

What are mental health conditions?

The term can cover a wide range of diagnoses and each student may require different support and adjustments. Diagnoses that may present include depression, anxiety, bipolar affective disorder, eating disorders and schizophrenia; all of which can impact and be impacted by the demands of university.

Individuals who face challenges regarding their mental health may face symptoms that include but are not limited to increased fatigue, poor concentration & focus, low mood, and panic attacks. Each student's experience may vary, therefore, discussions with the student are imperative.

It is also important to note that a student's mental health may fluctuate throughout the year and there may be an increase in symptoms around stress points in the academic year such as during exams or assessment deadlines.

How do mental health conditions impact on study?

- **Exams:** Difficulties working under timed conditions during exams due to reduced concentration
- **Academic Work:** Challenges with starting assessments or being able to stop and move on to the next task, which may be linked to avoidance, time management, procrastination, motivation, and perfectionism
- **Note Taking:** During lectures, taking notes can be more demanding; focus levels and distractions can impact
- **Presentations:** Difficulty making decisions or communicating ideas clearly (verbally or in writing) as well as increased anxiety can affect students' ability during oral exams or presentations

- **Group Work:** Difficulties can arise when working with others and throughout discussions which can lead to strained interpersonal dynamics
- **Feedback:** Sensitivity to perceived criticism might make it difficult for the student to receive or utilise feedback

Inclusive Teaching

These are strategies of benefit to all students but will also help to remove barriers for students with mental health conditions:

- Structure contact hours strongly, opening with an outline, flagging changes in topic, offering recaps and concluding with major points. This helps students follow the logic of the session, and if their concentration slips, they can more easily resume their engagement
- For in-class activities, shorter, concretely achievable tasks can be most productive
- Communicate deadlines well in advance and clearly describe academic tasks
- Provide clear written feedback even when a face-to-face feedback discussion takes place. Students with impaired concentration can thus avoid having to record feedback while discussing it and can have a helpful point of reference for later
- Proactively manage group discussions; offer clear tasks (you could specify student roles) and outcomes. This can help students understand when and why to make a contribution
- Timetables should take account of medication needs and enable students to access support.
- Avoid penalising or making judgements because of disability related absences

Reasonable Adjustments

- Prompt intervention in the case of any difficulties, to identify rapid deterioration and enable early strategies for support
- Provision of reading lists that indicate to students those readings that are key to the course or particularly relevant to a session or theme within the course. It is not necessary for the whole reading list to be ordered or exhaustive, students should still explore all possible research avenues
- Provision of examination adjustments such as extra time, a separate or familiar room with opportunity to familiarise in advance
- Consideration of adjustments to examination scheduling
- Permission to record lectures or take notes on a computer, and access to lecture capture.
- Library adjustments including extended loans
- Provision of a specialist mentor via the Disability and Mental Health Service (if needed) to help students develop strategies for managing their time, stress, the impact of their condition, maintain realistic study patterns and develop a healthy routine
- Additional preparation and support for field work, presentations, and years abroad: to offset stress and to anticipate and identify further barriers in a timely way

The legal position

The Equality Act protects people with mental health difficulties when their impairment is substantial and long-term. In such cases there will be a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments and not to treat less favourably for a reason relating to the disability. Experiencing short-term personal and emotional problems does not bring protection under the Act.

It's a legal requirement under the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) that outlaws direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics including age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, religion/belief and sexual orientation and requires us to take positive steps to promote equality.

This guide has been produced for LSE by the Disability and Mental Health Service, with credit to the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre at University of Cambridge who kindly permitted use of their staff guides in production of our own.