



STUDYING AT LSE

**A guide for students with a mental
health condition**

INTRODUCTION

1 in 4 people will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. Your time at university should be exciting and enriching, though the demands of your course may also bring times of stress and emotional upheaval. This can fluctuate for each individual. You may have a pre-existing mental health condition, or one that develops during your studies.

The aim of this guide is to help reflect on what might be useful for you during a mental health experience. It provides practical guidance about how to manage a mental health condition during your studies, as well as offer a range of resources about where to find support within the School.

Who is this guide for?

A mental health condition can present in many ways and is different for each individual. You may or may not have a diagnosis.

You may be experiencing depression, an anxiety disorder, eating disorder, fluctuating moods or psychotic symptoms amongst others. These issues may impact your sleep, concentration, motivation and focus.

You may find engaging with your studies more challenging and process information slower than usual. Your engagement with others may be impacted, and daily life may feel more challenging.

Getting the right support can be invaluable.

Here are some things to consider when studying at LSE while dealing with a mental-health condition.

Get the right support

Give some thought about what support you may require.

LSE's Student Wellbeing Service is comprised of two services which offer specialised support to those experiencing mental health difficulties:

Student Counselling Service

The [Student Counselling Service](#) provides short-term counselling to all students. They offer individual counselling and group sessions around a range of mental health conditions and issues.

Disability and Wellbeing Service

The [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#) offers practical support around managing your studies. Having adjustments in place can make it easier to better manage your academic work when you are experiencing difficulties with your mental health.

Give some thought to what adjustments may be helpful; think about previous adjustments you may have had, and seek support from DWS as early as possible so that we can implement the appropriate support.

You will have the chance to discuss your individual situation and support needs with one of our mental health advisers. This may include collaborating with you to produce an Inclusion Plan (IP) and or Individual Exam Adjustment form (IEA). Having these in place will allow for adjustments to your course, such as rest breaks in exams, or the possibility of short extensions to coursework deadlines if needed.

We can direct you towards a GP or specialist mental health services, and discuss practical support, such as funding options for mental-health mentoring and other information regarding external support if necessary.

What do you need?

It is always worth evaluating or reflecting on any past support has been helpful to you.

Make note, where possible, about how your individual situation may impact on your university experience. For example, do you find exams overwhelming? Difficulties with group discussions? Concentration difficulties when you are experiencing an episode of mental ill health?

Consider the impact of medication on your mental health, or changes in dosage/type of medication as well as any impact of a change in GP, therapist or support services. Please, do speak with DWS about any changes as you transition to life at LSE, as soon as you are able, so we can provide guidance, assistance and support you appropriately.

We recommend being prepared with information about your department and your academic mentor. If you can book an appointment with your academic mentor in the first weeks of your course, this can be helpful in establishing departmental support.

STUDY TIPS

Structure your studies

When you are experiencing a mental health issue, things can feel overwhelming, but a failure to prioritise and structure your studies can lead to further problems down the line.

Look at what assignment is due in first and what is likely to take you the most or least time to complete. Consider which areas are more challenging for you and may need more academic assistance. If you get stuck, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Break up your workload

Break up projects into smaller tasks and set mini deadlines for completing them.

For example, a date to pick your essay topic by, a date to have finished researching by, a date to have complete the first draft, and a date to have completed the final draft.

Doing an outline of a task might prove useful; bullet points to indicate what you want to include in an essay for instance, or mapping what articles and chapters are related to each part of

the essay. Look at how much time you will need for a task and set yourself realistic goals.

Find your happy place

Spend some time making your study space a comfortable place to study. Think about where you like to study, your surroundings, the time of day you are most productive, access to food, water and time away from other distractions, especially social media and the internet.

Remember, we are humans, not machines! We do not recommend studying throughout the night or sleeping in the library. Taking breaks and doing something different can actually enhance concentration and quality of work. Do take walks, regular breaks, sleep, read other things other than academic books, and try to keep well rested.

Set boundaries

During more intense periods of studying, particularly revision, you may not be able to keep up with other commitments. Consider

talking to friends and family about how there may be times you have to concentrate on studying. This may feel difficult and you may need support with setting boundaries and managing the expectations of others during this time.

You can talk to your mental health adviser, counsellor or read up on how to set boundaries in your personal life. Remember it is ok to not do everything; studying for a degree takes commitment and energy, and people will understand and that these periods are temporary and that in time you can resume social commitments.

Teaching sessions and notetaking

Some mental health issues can impact on your self-confidence, and at times lectures and seminars may feel daunting. Here are some guidelines which may be useful when attending teaching sessions and taking notes:

- Allow ample time to get there; you may want to visit the location before to know where to go and the time it takes.
- It may be worth considering arriving early to find a position in a room where you feel most comfortable.

- If there are other students who you feel most comfortable with, consider being near them or meet them before the start.
- If you can, make questions and notes beforehand: generate questions that you expected will be answered in the lecture/seminar.
- If you can record a lecture, do so. If you know they provide lecture capture, do make use of this.

Remember that you can always speak to your academic mentor about concerns around lectures/seminars. If you have a specialist mentor, speak to them for tips and guidance if you are having difficulties.

Reading

When reading for your programme, do utilise the support of your academic staff for guidance on the key texts, where possible. Prioritise what reading is necessary and plan a realistic amount of time to complete the reading you hope to do.

Read at a time of day which is best for you, in a place you feel most comfortable, and away from as many distractions as possible. Take regular breaks, have snacks and eat regularly, and do take walks or exercise during a period of intensified reading

and studying.

Try not to judge yourself negatively on the days you can't focus; seek support during those days, rest, know you can return to studying at a less challenging time.

Develop different approaches to academic reading. You do not always need to read every single word; a quick scan to extract the key points may be enough. Be clear on the purpose of your reading and don't believe you always have to read everything.

You can attend an [LSE Life](#) workshop on academic reading, or read up on techniques for academic and speed reading.

Essay writing

Before writing an essay, plan and make sure you understand what you are answering or writing about. Seek guidance with any questions about the topic or title. Do not be afraid to ask your lecturer if you are uncertain or need help.

Find a space which is comfortable for you and plan your time so it does not feel overwhelming. Switch off online engagement and distractions.

Write an outline and key points you want to include in the essay; asking yourself questions about the sequence of information and what you want to leave out.

Utilise the recordings of any lectures or resources that are available on your subject.

Proof-read your work after you finish and possibly consider asking a trusted person proof-read it too.

After you complete a writing assignment read it aloud and record it on your phone. Listening to what you wrote as you read it over several times can help you spot errors and identify edits you'd like to make. Listening to your work can also help you remember it later down the road.

Revision

Again, work in a space that you feel optimises your ability to concentrate. Make sure you are comfortable and have access to food and drink.

Find somewhere quiet, away from distractions. Try using ear plugs or noise cancelling headphones to help with focus and

concentration.

Give thought to what types of learning techniques work for you; does recording information help? Visual maps? Writing cue-cards? Mnemonics?

Remember to look at past exam questions and papers. Consider doing your own mock exam under timed conditions as practice for the real thing.

Take breaks. Sometimes short bursts of studying interlinked with ten-minute breaks can be very effective to maintain concentration and absorb information without burning out.

Do make sure you are eating well, exercising, engaging in pleasurable activities, resting and sleeping.

If a schedule helps, map out a plan to follow; including scheduling in the breaks and self-care.

Prioritise which revision to do and to start as early as you can to avoid additional anxiety and burn-out.

Your mental health is important

Remember that if you are already involved in therapy and need to increase your visits – do so. If you already take a medication and need to review it or increase the dose – do so and speak with your GP or specialist doctor. If these are things you are not already doing it can be useful to consider them during times of increased pressure and stress.

Sometimes, looking after our mental health has to be the priority, and pacing yourself can be the key to this. Don't be afraid to ask for help before it is too late.

And remember...

Believe in yourself!

Remember that just because you may suffer setbacks, and it might take you longer to do something compared to your peers, this doesn't mean you can't do it well. Recognise and understand your strengths – pace yourself and find a way of working which works for you!

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

It may be helpful to explore if assistive technology can help you be more productive.

Writing

If you have difficulties with writing or typing you may want to try dictation software, having your computer or device type what you say.

There are two ways to access dictation software for free, which is in-built for [Mac users](#), or available through [Microsoft Word](#) for PC users. If you do not find either of these options work very accurately with your voice you may wish to explore using a form of the Dragon software.

[Dragon Anywhere](#) is an app from the world leaders in dictation software which adapts to your voice and works very accurately for most users. Versions are also available for [desktops and laptops](#).

Mind-mapping

Mind-mapping software allows you to create digital brainstorms and plan and organise your work visually. Popular programmes

include [MindView](#) and [MindManager](#)

Have your computer read to you

If you have you have difficulties reading a screen for a prolonged period, or find it easier to process verbal information, you may want to try out the various free and easy ways in which your computer or device can read to you:

- Most digital documents can be read out loud [using built-in functionality](#).
- Browsers such as Google Chrome have [read aloud extensions](#) for use on webpages.
- Alternatively you can copy and paste any text into the [Text-to-speech Reader website](#).

Help making your device easier to use

The following webpages contain a lot of useful tips and tricks to make your device easier to use:

- [My computer my way](#)
- [Diversity and Ability resources list](#)

OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

[Self-care tips on student wellbeing](#)

[Information and support tips for student mental health](#)

[Information around living with mental illness](#)

[How to look after your mental health during revision and exams](#)

[National Union of Students top ten tips on mental health and wellbeing](#)

[5 essential mental health tips for students](#)