Meaningful Mental Health Policy

Title:	Meaningful mental health	Date of Group Chat:	DD/MM/YY
Proposer name:	Amanda Campbell White	Role:	Vice Presidents (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)
Seconder name:	Caroline Hill and Meri Ceti-Andreassen	Role:	Disabled Student's rep (Chelmsford) ARU Student

Union Notes:

1. Mental health is a huge conversation not only within universities but also in wider society. Students arriving at university for the first time need to adapt to significant changes, such as moving to a new area, separation from family and friends, establishing a new social network, managing a tight budget, combining academic study with family commitments, coping with a disability in a new environment and, for international students, living in a new country and adjusting to a different culture. For many, these changes are exciting and challenging and an intrinsic part of the attraction of going to university.

2. Mental health is a concern and priority within the Higher Education sector with various resources and projects happening in order to tackling mental health[1]

3. *"The vast majority of the studies found people experience positive outcomes from participating in meaningful activity or occupation, including:*

- *a sense of purpose or meaning to life*
- *a structure or routine to the day; acquisition of skills*
- *feeling useful*
- *a sense of identity*
- *social interaction and increased social networks*
- *improved wellbeing; access to employment or education*
- *qualifications*
- *creative challenge*
- *self-expression*
- *improved confidence*
- *aspiration*
- *improved self-esteem"*[2] (Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust)

1. Student suicide rates are at their highest for 15 years and haven't significantly decreased since 2013.
2. The 'Let's Be Honest' report showed that 70% of ARU students surveyed suffered from stress.[3]

[1] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/mental-health/what-we-re-doing/
[2] https://www.ndti.org.uk/resources/publications/the-impact-and-effectiveness-of-meaningful-activity-for-people-with-mental
[3] https://issuu.com/angliaruskinstudentsunion/docs/let_s_be_honest_report_72dpi

Union Believes:

List what you think the Union should believe as a result of your policy. For example: 'That freedom of speech is an important right and should be respected.'

1. The students' union and aru will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment of anyone who experiences a mental health problem, and will provide support for any student, staff, officers or volunteers who are affected by this
2. The union and university recognise that the nature of the work we do can sometimes be distressing (e.g. staff having contact with vulnerable groups and disclosures of harassment/violence)
3. We should respect the confidentiality of information relating to any mental health difficulty that may be disclosed by staff or students
4. In order to be 'meaningful', a campaign or event should do at least one of the following things:
   a. Equip students with resilience/mindfulness skills to help them manage their stress in the long term
   b. Raise money for a mental health charity
   c. Offer students resources related to mental health charities/services.
5. Among the most affected by poor mental health are those from liberation groups (BME, Women, international, LGBT, Disabled and so forth).

Union Resolves:

List the actions the Union should carry out to deliver the policy. For example: 'To create a list of organisations that will be campaigned against and not allowed to take part in Union events.'

1. To promote mental health and well-being within all relevant aspects of operation at the union and university;
2. To ensure that the union hold the university to account on how they are and will support student's with mental   making sure they sit within university wellbeing steering groups
3. To ensure that the officer team continue to lobby the university to keep the uncompleted recommendations from the Let's Be Honest report
4. We will raise awareness of mental well-being among students, staff, officers, and volunteers through open and positive discussion, and the promotion of 'self-care'
5. We will sign post students to relevant support services within ARU such as counselling and wellbeing, Slivercloud and Big White wall and the wider community.
6. Mental Health campaigns run by the union will have clear tangible outcomes that refer back to campaign aims
7. Continue to and push for greater diversity of representation on university committees relating to student wellbeing as mental health can look very different among different individual and liberation groups.
8. To lobby the university to ensure our counselling and wellbeing services are accessible to ALL students

Policy Summary:

We are aiming to provide a safer environment for students and staff at ARU. We are here to support students and staff within the university regardless of their gender, race, sexuality or economic situation. Mental health campaigns should have clear outcomes that will directly benefit people rather than just being a promotion of awareness. University committees that relate to student mental health should have vast and diverse student representation on them.

Please e-mail to, Democracy Coordinator at