How to Support Student **Mental Health** and **Well-Being** in Higher Ed

It's Time We Talk About Mental Health on Campus

Introduction

Mental health is an expression we've heard extensively over the past few years, as it is still an urgent matter in many areas, including the higher education industry.

Students (and staff) face diverse well-being issues: family problems, financial difficulties, feelings of isolation, social pressure, anxiety, stress…

Attending university can be stressful. It involves significant lifestyle changes, especially for new students who, in most cases, have to adjust to a new environment, interact with various people and live away from home. According to the Inclusive Higher Education project[1], **40% of students experience emotional and mental health issues, and approximately one in five struggle with mental health disorders.**

Even if higher education leaders have implemented measures to help, there is still much to do. Fortunately, student well-being and mental health have become top priority issues for many institutions.

At Ready Education, we put student success first. This is why we wanted to build a guide focused on their well-being and what institutions can do to improve their experience.

In this guide, we will highlight the following:

- **Some key statistics** about student mental health;
- **Ways to support your students** at all stages of their studies;
- **Concrete tools** to help solve issues surrounding mental health.

*Source: www.inclusivehighereducation.eu/mental-health-framework

Part 1. Key Statistics on Mental Health in Higher Ed

Mental health issues affect students at all levels of education. According to a study by postgraduate researchers[2], **only 14% of students in the UK report having low anxiety.** A survey by the Association for University and College Center Directors[3] found that higher education's most frequent mental health concerns are **anxiety (58.9%) and depression (48%),** while MBA students[4] are similarly affected by depression and anxiety symptoms.

Also, an ONS (Office of National Statistics) study[5] found that **45% of students in England reported their mental health and well-being had deteriorated** since October 2022.

And mental health issues know no boundaries. Across the Atlantic, in 6 years, **student anxiety in higher education institutions jumped from 17% to 31%,** according to a study[6] by the Healthy Minds Network and the American College Health Association. In 2020, 60% of university students reported the pandemic has made it harder to access mental health care.

Furthermore, in November 2021, the Harvard Graduate School of Education stated that nearly **40% of college students experiencing depression,** according to a 2020 study, **34% reporting anxiety,** and **13% saying they had thought seriously about suicide in the last year.**

According to the OECD study *"Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID-19 crisis"*[7]**, the pandemic has turned into a mental health crisis for young people:**

15-24 year-olds' mental health has worsened significantly in 2020-21. In most countries, **mental health issues have doubled or more**

Young people were **30% to 80%** more likely to report **symptoms of depression** or anxiety than adults in Belgium, France, and the United States in March 2021

Mental health support for young people - notably in schools, universities and workplaces **has been heavily disrupted**

Closures of educational institutions at all levels have contributed to weakening of protective factors, like daily routine and social interactions that help maintain good mental health

The impact of COVID-19 on labour markets is disproportionately affecting young people. Leaving soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates face an uphill task to find and keep a job, putting them at elevated risk of experiencing mental health issues
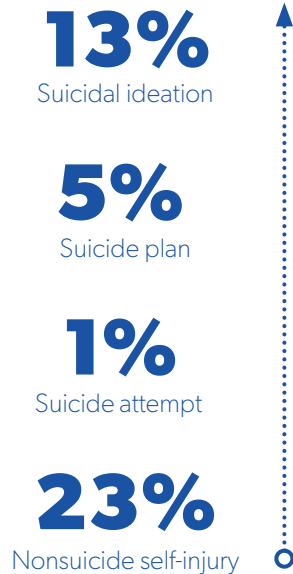
Depression Anxiety

Percent of students who screened for depression and anxiety in 2021:

22%
Severe depression

19%
Moderate depression

41%
Any depression

17%
Severe anxiety

18%
Moderate anxiety

35%
Any anxiety

Suicidal Thinking

Thirteen percent of college students said they had thought about suicide in the past year, and 23 percent had engaged in nonsuicidal self-injury.

13%
Suicidal ideation

5%
Suicide plan

1%
Suicide attempt

23%
Nonsuicide self-injury

Source: Healthy Minds Winter/Spring 2021 Survey

Part 2: How to Support Students' Well-being Throughout Their Studies

As you can see, the statistics surrounding mental health issues in higher ed are concerning. But there are ways you can help and support students facing these issues, from the moment they start their studies to the day they graduate.

Supporting Your Students at Every Stage
What can you do to ensure your students' well-being?

START

- **Ensure a Warm Welcome:** help students explore the campus by organising open days, a campus visit, an integration seminar, providing students with a (physical or digital) campus map…
- **Access to information:** make sure your students have all the information and resources they need, at any stage of their studies (accomodation opportunities and support, class schedule, grades, exam dates, assignment deadlines, student clubs, organisations, associations, campus events, etc.)
- **Encourage students to participate** in their first campus experiences and activities

FIRST YEAR

- **Guide them through their first classes, assignments, exams:** give them tips, do's and don'ts to succeed in their first year
- **Organise career fairs** and encourage your students to apply for summer internships

SECOND YEAR

- **Prepare them for their professional training year:** provide them with tools and resources to build their resumes, develop their soft skills…
- Support them through their **exam period**
- Keep encouraging them to take part in the **campus community** to maintain them engaged and develop their sense of belonging

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING YEAR

- Prepare them to take on **new projects and responsibilities**
- **Help them learn how to network:** organise workshops with professionals, give them the opportunity to interact with alumni…
- **Give them career advice**

LAST YEAR

- **Support them** through the hard work they'll have to put in for this last year and the pressure they'll be facing to graduate: meetings with counsellors, therapists…
- **Guide them to prepare their future**, find out about the multiple options they have, decide what they will do next

Innovative Ways to Face Mental Health Challenges

You can also implement Innovative ways to boost well-being among students:[8]

- **Raising awareness and addressing stigma:** integrated peer-to-peer programmes and student-led outreach initiatives can open up conversations to better understand and support learner needs. They can also help students empathise with each other, share similar experiences and raise awareness regarding available mental health resources;

- **Creating and designing a culture for well-being:** the role of institutions here is to ensure student well-being on multiple levels (emotional, physical, social, intellectual, financial). They can do that by developing policies, programmes, wellness centres that contribute to a holistic campus culture, and hiring more counsellors to address the student mental health crisis;

- **Providing digital mental health services:** technology solutions like apps make advisors more accessible. It helps students reach out and seek assistance;

- **Conduct continuous surveys and assessments** to take the students' pulse and know when action is needed;

- **Measure success:** track data and analytics thanks to technology to assess the success of mental health programmes and adapt them;

- **Building a community:** developing a sense of belonging encourages meaningful relationships and mutual support but also helps students find purpose, meaning and mastery;

- **Creating a tool kit** for deans, chairs, directors on how to model and support work-life balance, etc. A flourishing faculty and staff can best support student development.

Part 3: Concrete Solutions to Help your Students

Tools and Associations

There are several initiatives across the world to support mental health and well-being. Here are some of them that your students can reach out to and from which you can draw inspiration regarding best practices, tools and processes to implement:

- **Many European Universities offer student counselling services.** You will find a European Commission list of some of them **here.**
- **Mental Health Europe** is the largest independent network organisation representing mental health users, professionals and service providers across Europe;
- **The European University Association** represents more than 850 universities and national rectors' conferences in 49 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. They offer resources and solutions to tackle, among others, student mental health issues;
- **Embrace HE** is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, designed to help address problems of mental health and lack of well-being in students in higher education;
- **Mind:** this association supports people in communities across England and Wales. Their range of services includes supported housing, crisis helplines, drop-in centres, employment and training schemes, counselling and befriending;
- **The Mental Health Foundation** is the UK's leading charity for everyone's mental health. Their vision is for a world with good mental health for all. With prevention at the heart of what they do, they aim to find and address the sources of mental health problems so that people and communities can thrive;

- **Student Minds** is the UK's student mental health charity. They empower students and members of the university community to look after their own mental health, support others and create change;
- **The WHO World Mental Health International College Student** initiative is designed to:

  1. **generate accurate epidemiological data** on unmet needs for the treatment of mental, substance and behavioural disorders among college students worldwide;
  2. **implement and evaluate web-based interventions** for both prevention and treatment of these disorders;
  3. **disseminate the evidence-based** interventions found to be effective.

- **MoodSpace** is a platform for students packed with reliable information, tips and self-help to tackle emotional problems to help them study. They share student stories, pep talks, etc. It's also a place for friends, parents or staff members to understand what they can do to improve student well-being;
- **Interventions+** is a feature from the Ready Education mobile solutions. It helps institutions address the top issues that lead to student disengagement and other behaviours that result in student dropouts. Based on a student's responses, workflows can be set up to automatically connect students with the resources they need, allowing you to intervene much earlier in the cycle and have the opportunity to actually make a difference in their outcome.

Supporting Mental Health Issues Through Tech

The continuous growth of the internet and apps has led to healthcare services making use of these technologies to help monitor health, prevent and treat any problem. This is how e-health was born. It is all about using technology to improve people's health and wellness, a practice that increased with the pandemic.

Higher education institutions can also ride this wave and use technology to improve the student experience and well-being.

The Ready Education Mobile App

You want to develop a mobile app within your institution?
Find out about our solutions to take your campus digital.

Who are we?
Ready Education is the leading mobile student engagement platform on a mission to improve student success in higher education worldwide.

Trusted by 700+ institutions in more than 25 countries, we have developed a panel of solutions to build communities, drive retention and help students succeed.

READY Education

7M+
Students

715+
Insitutions

25
Countries

10 Years
of Experience

Why choose us?

Solutions in the palm of your hand

With Ready Education, gather in one place all the useful resources for students, communicate easily with them and help them interact with each other. Our mobile solutions centralise all of your institutions' services. They ensure their visibility and use among students.
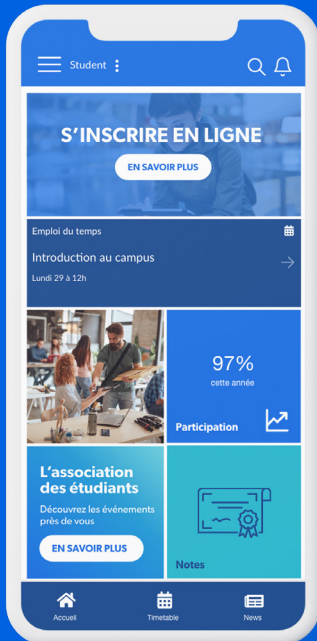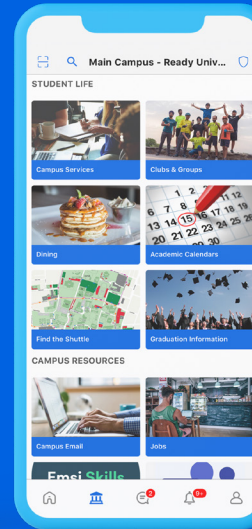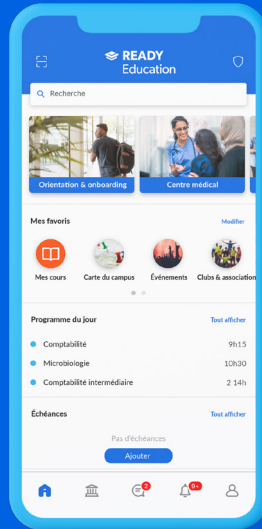
## **A smooth and simple implementation process**

Our implementation managers, campus success managers and product support specialists will guide you throughout the implementation process. We are committed to making the integration of your digital solution an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all of your teams. We build, integrate and optimise your whole project before launching it on your campus.

A tailor-made experience

A dedicated project team: together with your teams, we build your mobile project and then help you enrich it and add new features over time

A regular and personalised follow up: your Ready Education account manager will provide you with reports, documentation and personalised contents to develop your mobile app according to your objectives

A service approved by 715+ institutions: our teams have a thorough knowledge of the higher education world and its challenges. They will help you make your mobile app a long-term success
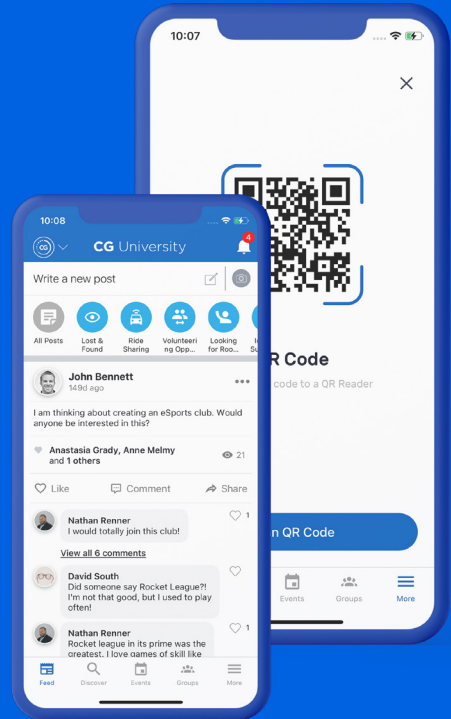
Want to know more about our solutions? **Request a demo**

Ready Education empowers institutions worldwide to build and engage their campus community, improving communications and experiences that increase retention and drive student success.

READY Education

Find out more at:
readyeducation.com

Contact us at: **1 (877) 588-7508**
or email: **info@readyeducation.com**