

# Supervisors' Workshop

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Student Health and Counselling

# Mental health of PhD students

- +/- 32% of PhD students have or will develop a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at some time during their candidature (severe, with 51% moderate, 40% mild)
- 67% will feel overwhelmed
- 54% will report feeling depressed frequently
- 45% will report experiencing emotional or stress related problems that significantly affect their wellbeing and academic performance
- Only a minority of PhD students access counselling, with International students less likely to use support services
- A Finnish study (Stubb et al., 2011) of 383 PhD students found 44% academic community a source of empowerment, 56% experienced it as a source of burden, lack of meaningfulness, not knowing one's own place, poor support for learning and doing research
- 10% of PhD students will consider suicide

# Organisational

- Low levels of well-being results from imbalance between individual and work organisation (university)
- Stress may stem from problems in PhD process: problems concerning one's learning; varying aspects of insecurity (eg. financial); frequent evaluation; competitive atmosphere; supervision; workload; relationship to peers and faculty
- Consistent link between high job demands and emotional exhaustion and depressive feelings
- Low job control results in significant emotional costs
- Social support (colleagues, supervisor) important – low support results in exhaustion, job tension and low satisfaction

# Wellbeing



## Wellness strategy –

“Healthy people, Healthy places, Healthy lives”

Vision: To be a University that values wellness by actively encouraging and supporting wellbeing opportunities for our students and staff. Our wellness culture will become a part of the fabric of this community through our healthy actions and our beliefs.

## Why care about well-being?

The University community has an interest in improving the happiness and well-being of graduate students for a straightforward reason: to enable graduate students to do their best work. Balanced, happy people are more productive, more creative, more collaborative, better at pursuing long-term goals, more likely to find employment, and more physically and psychologically resilient, among other things. Positive emotion is associated with curiosity, interest and synthetic thinking. In contrast, depression is associated with loss of interest, helplessness, difficulty concentrating and remembering details, and worse.

*(Graduate Student Happiness and Well-Being Report, University of California, Berkeley, 2014)*

# Well-being?

Positive affect – *an emotional component*

Resilience – *a coping component*

Satisfaction with relationships and other dimensions of one's life  
- *a cognitive component*

Effective functioning – *a performance component*





# Ten predictors of well-being for postgraduate students

1. Career prospects (20-30% employment)
2. Overall health (44% sick/ill during semester)
3. Living conditions
4. Academic engagement
5. Social support
6. Financial confidence
7. Academic progress and preparation
8. Sleep (20% sleep the recommended 8 hours)
9. Feeling valued and included in the department
10. Mentorship and advising (supervision)

## The supervision relationship

Body of research showing significant associations between specific leadership/supervisor styles and levels of stress and wellbeing [amongst PhD students].



# The supervision relationship

Supervisors can have influence over:

- Academic progress and preparation
- Finances
- Career prospects
- Feeling valued and included in the department

## The supervision relationship

Having a supervisor who is a “real mentor to me” is an important predictor of a doctoral students’ life satisfaction (*positive function, satisfied, has important things wanted from life, close to ideal, excellent conditions of life*).



# The 10 Most Important Qualities of the Ideal Graduate Research Supervisor

1. Support
2. Availability
3. Interest and enthusiasm
4. Knowledge and expertise in the field surrounding the PhD
5. Interest in the student's career
6. Good communication
7. Constructive feedback
8. Provides direction and structure
9. Approachability and rapport
10. Experience and interest in supervision



# The 10 Most Substantial Problems Faced by Students in Graduate Research Supervision

1. The supervisor is too busy to be effective
2. Poor feedback
3. The supervisor lacks commitment and interest
4. Tensions or conflicting perspectives from within the supervisory panel
5. Poor communication and disagreements about the project
6. Conflicting or unrealistic expectations of each other
7. The supervisor is not up-to-date with the field
8. Lacks experience in research and / or supervision
9. Personality clashes
10. Lack of cultural competence





In suggesting that supervision is not a major cause for concern, our results concur with those of PRES (HEA 2008) which showed that while students identified supervision as the most important aspect for successful completion it was perceived to be the most satisfactory (amongst other factors). Clearly, supervision is important to the overall research student experience, but the evidence presented herein suggests that **other factors threaten their well-being more.**

Bridget Juniper , Elaine Walsh , Alan Richardson & Bernard Morley (2012) A new approach to evaluating the well-being of PhD research students, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 37:5, 563-576, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2011.555816  
To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2011.555816>



# Student Support Services

Student life services - Massey University - Internet Explorer

http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/student-life/services-and-resources/services-for-students\_home.cfm


Site wide search

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When you study with Massey, you become part of our community. Like any community, there is a large network of information and support services available to students.



**Counselling and health services**

Being a successful student isn't just about academics - you need to look after yourself as well. We have a range of services and support options available.


[Find out more >](#)



**Career and employability services**

We provide careers advice, guidance and information to Massey students and recent Massey graduates. We can also help you develop your professional presence on LinkedIn.


[Find out more >](#)



**Pastoral care**

Each campus has a range of services to assist and support Massey students. This includes financial and budgeting services, leadership programmes and spiritual services.


[Find out more >](#)



**Other services**

Massey provides a range of other services for students. These include centres for teaching and learning, childcare, student advisors, information services, library services and Māori@Massey.


[Find out more >](#)



**Student Associations**

Each campus has its own student association, clubs, cultural groups, student communications and student focussed links.


[Find out more >](#)



**Student Services Levy**

Student engagement forums give students the opportunity to ask questions and give their point of view to Massey. The forums are held twice a year on each campus.

[Find out more >](#)



**Advocacy**

The professional advocacy service is free and confidential. Get advice and support on academic concerns or complaints that may affect your studies.

[Find out more >](#)

http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/student-life/services-and-resources/student-forum/student\_engagement\_forum.cfm



Further insights can be gained from an examination of the most bothersome items. For example, in the Research domain data, the two most troublesome items are a concern about lack of progress with research and low confidence in one's ability to carry out research to the appropriate standard. This suggests that awareness about the basic nature of research as a highly challenging endeavour with unpredictable, nonlinear progress is low. Many students may be suffering self-doubt unnecessarily. Akerlind (2008) identified 'becoming confident as a researcher' as a key aspect of early researcher development and noted that if confidence is not developed, good researchers may well be lost to the academic profession.

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# Identifying students in distress

## Academic Signs

- Deterioration in quality of work
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Repeated absence
- Lack of engagement in participation-oriented classes or with lab mates
- Inappropriate disruptions or monopolizing classroom time

# Identifying students in distress

## Physical or Psychological Signs

- Excessive anxiety or panic
- Apathy, lack of energy, a change in sleeping or eating habits, or dramatic weight gain or loss
- Marked changes in personal hygiene, work habits, or social behavior
- Mood elevation
- Isolation or withdrawal
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs

# Identifying students in distress

## Other Factors to Consider

- Direct statements indicating family problems, personal losses such as death of a family member or the break-up of a relationship
- Expressions of concern about a student by peers
- Written note or verbal statement that has a sense of hopelessness or finality
- Your sense, however vague, that something is seriously amiss

## Talking to a student in distress

- If in doubt – ask the student if they are okay (in private)
- Accept and respect what is said
- Focus on an aspect of the problem that is manageable
- Avoid easy answers
- Help identify resources needed to improve things
- Help student recall constructive methods used in the past to cope
- Trust your insight and reactions
- Encourage the person to seek help
- Respect the student's value system, even if you don't agree



## Talking to a student in distress

- Let others know your concerns.
- Attempt to address the person's needs and seek appropriate resources.
- But don't attempt any counselling
- Do not swear secrecy or offer confidentiality
- Encourage the person to seek help.
- Respect the student's value system, even if you don't agree.



## When there is urgency

- Get in touch with Student Counselling
- After hours Mental Health Crisis Lines (emergency team):  
PN 0800 653 357; WGTN 0800745 477; AK 0800 800 717
- 111



# Massey Counselling Services

## Palmerston North

Health & Counselling Centre

<http://pncounselling.massey.ac.nz>

[s.counselling@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.counselling@massey.ac.nz)

Extn 85533

## Wellington

Student Health & Counselling Centre

(04) 979 3030

## Albany

Health & Counselling Centre

<http://albanyhealthandcounselling.massey.ac.nz>

[Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz)

Extn 41400





## Counselling self help resources

### Counselling self help resources

[Improve your wellbeing](#) ▶

[Improve your mood](#) ▶

[Improve your grades](#) ▶

[Improve your relationships](#) ▶

[Emergencies and safety](#) ▶

[Resource index](#) ▶

[Contact us](#)

## Counselling self help resources



### Improve your wellbeing

Dive in here to explore what things help make us well and keep us well, in our bodies, minds and emotions.



### Improve your mood

Find useful material on stress, anxiety, alcohol & drug use, depression, grief and issues that may lead to your mood being affected.



### Improve your grades

Check in here for help with procrastination, motivation, concentration and other stuff to help you stay on top academically.



### Improve your relationships

Get information on how to survive a breakup, and how to get your flat working well for everyone.



### Emergencies and safety

Find important information on earthquake procedures, harassment and counselling emergencies.



### Resource index

All our useful PDFs right there in one place!

[Book an appointment](#) ▶

[Info for staff](#) ▶

[Info for parents](#) ▶

[What is counselling?](#) ▶



### Upcoming workshops

We regularly run health, wellness and mindfulness workshops on all campuses. Take a look to see what's coming up next in:

- [Albany](#)
- [Manawātū](#)
- [Wellington](#)

## Supports available - (for you and for the students)

- Health & Counselling: *Assist students to minimise the impact of emotional and psychological factors on academic performance*
  - Regular and Emergency appointments
  - Consultation & Training
- Chaplaincy
- Recreation Centre
- International Student Support
- Career & Employability Services
- Centre for Teaching & Learning
- Advocacy



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