

Multi-language Toolkit: Embedding good student wellbeing practice into institutional processes and teaching and learning

Introduction

Developed by Vilnius University Team

The concept, proposed by World Health Organization in 2001, that Mental Health is not merely the absence of mental illness, is unanimously endorsed by different stakeholders, while the equivalence between mental health and well-being/functioning provides a wide room for discussion (Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold, & Sartorius, 2015). Well-being can be either understood as a key aspect of Mental Health (Keyes, 2014; WHO, 2004), reflecting the provision of their interconnection, or it is stated, that Mental Health difficulties can negatively affect the well-being (http://embracehe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Toolkit1_Final-1.pdf), expressing the relationship between two different phenomena. In any way, the conceptualization of well-being goes beyond the issues of Mental Health, encompassing the perception that life is going well (Ruggeri, Garcia-Garzon, Maguire, Matz, & Huppert, 2020). Well-being is linked to success at professional, personal, and interpersonal levels, with those individuals high in well-being exhibiting greater productivity in the workplace, more effective learning, increased creativity, more prosocial behaviours, and positive relationships (Huppert, & So, 2013).

Soutter, O'Steen & Gilmore (2014) also argue that well-being has been remaining a narrowly defined, if not undefined, term in education; therefore, they conducted an extensive multi-disciplinary literature review and revealed well-being's multi-dimensionality, as evidenced by the diversity of terms used to discuss and measure it. The following seven domains of well-being were identified (Soutter et al., 2014):

- *Having*, which relates to resources, tools, and opportunities, mostly external and gained either through student's efforts or the process of exchange.
- *Being* is distinguished through perception of Self.
- *Relating* denotes experiencing a sense of place within the school's physical and socio-cultural context. This domain of well-being emphasizes that all students – regardless of need, ability, sexual orientation or cultural identity, worldview, background, or aims – should have access to all spaces, information, and activities.
- The other two domains, *Feeling* and *Thinking*, are seen as mutually enhancing and can be nurtured by giving considered attention to student's emotional expression and decision making, and incorporating both affective and cognitive appraisals into learning process.
- *Functioning*; and *Striving* domains reflect active and purposeful engagement with and pursuit of necessary resources and or opportunities.

The seven domains represent specific aspects of student well-being (Soutter et al., 2014) and, combined together, can guide the fortification of student well-being practices.

Students with good well-being will thrive in higher education. They are more likely to enjoy themselves, academically succeed and stay in a provider (GuildHE, 2018). There are many attempts to promote students' well-being; however, the most successful efforts have been shown by application of positive psychology approach, that allows the individual student to excel through an emphasis on personal strengths (Williams, Horrell, Edmiston, and Brady, 2018). According to Seldon & Martin (2018), positive psychology principles can be applied in higher education via positive education, which is not the alternative to traditional academic education; however, it may complement and support it allowing students and staff to perform at their best, thus enabling to achieve the objectives of teaching more successfully. The main principles of positive education include proactivity rather than reactivity and focus on majority, if not all students, rather than minority. Positive education emphasizes active engagement and control over situation rather than passive observation and reception of misfortune. Seeing students as human beings not data, building human capacity instead of creating dependency and focus on long-term rather than short-term perspective – they all are among key principles of positive education (Seldon & Martin, 2018).

It is important to note, that securing students' well-being is an ongoing process, which should start before students enter tertiary education. Different strategies, like early contacts with students before their arrival, mentoring and staff-tutoring, Mental Health screening are applied on purpose to prepare the student for university studies, and the list of these strategies is not exhausted.

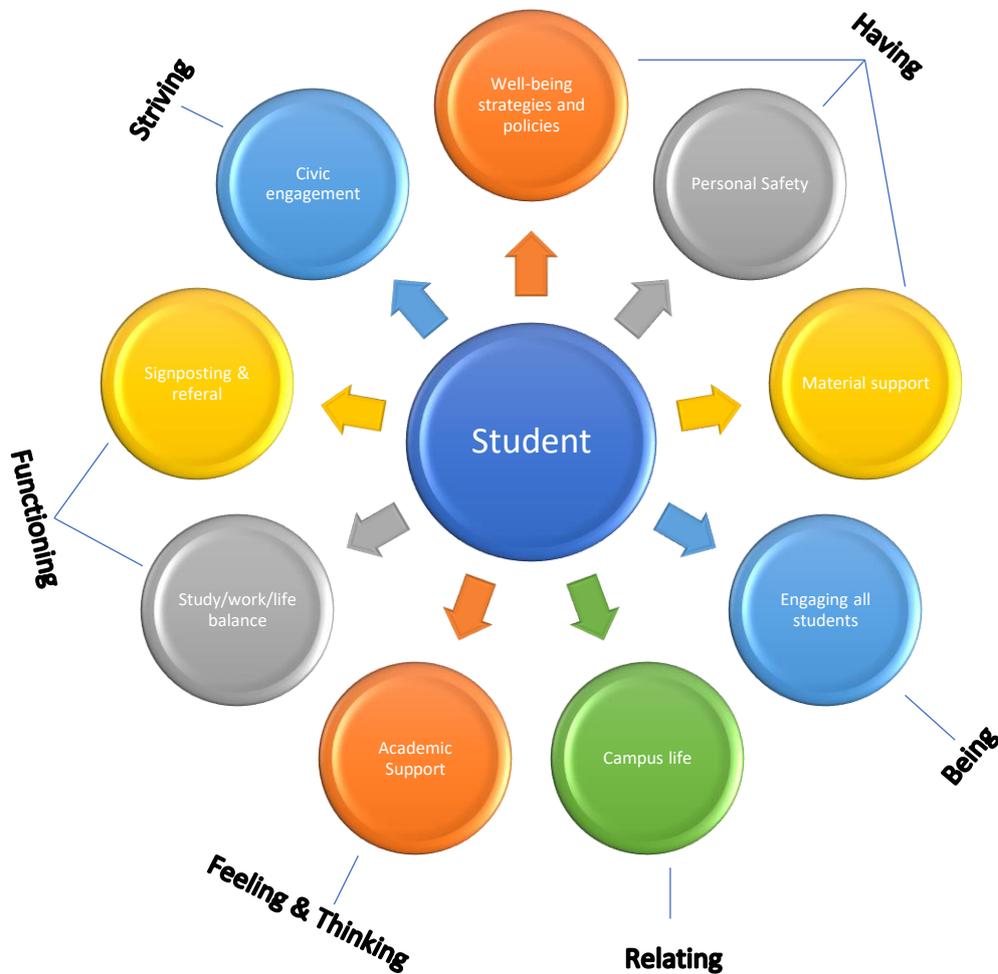


Figure 1. *The relationship of the Toolkit's chapters with the domains of the concept of students' well-being.*

The Toolkit aims to address good student wellbeing practice as an institutional holistic set of practices, focusing upon how strategic, administrative and teaching aspects of HE can work together to create better environments for student mental health and wellbeing. Its content reflects the concept of well-being, described above, dedicating one or several chapters to each domain and building all the best practices around the student. Moreover, the framework of the Toolkit is based on the results of GuildHE research report (2018), where ten key areas of students' well-being in HEIs were identified (see Figure 1).

References

- Galderisi, S., Heinz, A., Kastrup, M., Beezhold, J., & Sartorius, N. (2015). Toward a new definition of mental health. *World psychiatry: official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 14(2), 231–233. doi: 10.1002/wps.20231
- GuildHE (2018). Well-being in Higher Education. A Research Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.guildhe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/GuildHE-Wellbeing-in-Higher-Education-WEB.pdf>
- Huppert, F.A., & So, T.T. (2013). Flourishing Across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Well-Being. *Social indicators research*, 110(3), 837–861. doi: 10.1007/s11205-011-9966-7
- Keyes C.L.M. (2014). Mental health as a complete state: how the salutogenic perspective completes the picture. In: G.F. Bauer & O. Hämmig (Eds). *Bridging occupational, organizational and public health*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 179–92.
- Ruggeri, K., Garcia-Garzon, E., Maguire, Á., Matz, S., & Huppert, F.A. (2020). Well-being is more than happiness and life satisfaction: a multidimensional analysis of 21 countries. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 18(192).doi: 10.1186/s12955-020-01423-y
- Soutter, A.K., O'Steen, B., & Gilmore, A. (2014) The student well-being model: a conceptual framework for the development of student well-being indicators. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 19(4), 496-520. doi: 10.1080/02673843.2012.754362
- Williams, N., Horrell, L., Edmiston, D., and Brady, M. (2018) The Impact of Positive Psychology on Higher Education," *The William & Mary Educational Review*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 12. Retrieved from: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/wmer/vol5/iss1/12>
- World Health Organization. *Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report)* Geneva: World Health Organization; 2004
- World Health Organization. *The world health report 2001: mental health: new understanding, new hope*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2001.