



Toolkit Title: Embedding good student wellbeing practice into institutional processes and teaching and learning

Partners on Embrace HE project



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Executive Summary

This toolkit is one of the open access educational documents that make up the outputs of the EMBRACE HE project, which was funded by the ERASMUS+ UK Agency and is running 2019-2022, project number KA203-5B5EC153.

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The EMBRACE Project partners are: Birmingham City University, United Kingdom; Universidad Publica De Navarra Spain; Western Balkans Institute, Serbia; Panepistimo Kritis Greece; Vilnius Universitetas, Lithuania. Colleagues from Vilnius University led the development of this toolkit, with support from the other project partners.

This toolkit was designed to focus on embedding good student wellbeing practice into higher educational institutional processes and teaching and learning. It aims to address good student wellbeing practice as an institutional holistic set of ways of working, focusing upon how strategic, administrative, and teaching aspects of HE can operate together to create better environments for student mental health and wellbeing. Its content reflects the importance of the concept of well-being, described below to holistic institutional approaches, focusing on different aspects of this and promoting the building of best practices around the student and their needs.

What is wellbeing? This is an important question. The World Health Organization (2001) argues that mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness but having a sense of wellbeing too. However, the idea of wellbeing and its relationship to wider health and mental health, is complex (Galderisi et al, 2015). Well-being can be understood to be a key aspect of mental health (Keyes, 2014; WHO, 2004). It goes beyond mental health and encompasses the perception that life is going well and that the individual feels good ‘in themselves’ (Ruggeri et al,

2020). Well-being is linked to success at professional, personal, and interpersonal levels, with those individuals with high levels of well-being exhibiting greater productivity, effective learning, creativity, more prosocial behaviours, and positive relationships (Huppert & So, 2013).

The framework of the Toolkit is based on the results of the GuildHE report (2018), which identified ten key areas of students' well-being: civic engagement; wellbeing strategies/policies; personal safety; material support; signposting and referral; study/work/life balance; academic support; campus life; engaging all students (see diagram on the main toolkit page at the website: <https://embracehe.org/toolkit-05/>). This resource builds on the findings of the GuildHE (2018) report, along with the work of Soutter, O'Steen & Gilmore (2014), who argue that well-being is multi-dimensionality, identifying seven domains of well-being:

- **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 HEIs physical and socio-cultural context. This domain of well-being emphasizes that all students should have equal access to spaces, information, and activities.
- **Feeling** and **Thinking** are two mutually enhancing domains, which can be nurtured by attending to student's emotional expression and decision making, incorporating both affective and cognitive appraisals.
- **Functioning** and **Striving** are domains reflecting 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), which combined can guide student well-being practices and are used here in the toolkit to help you to understand the key issues and how they might relate to your own practice.

The toolkit is also influenced and shaped by the framework of a positive psychological approach (GuildHE, 2018) to thinking about student wellbeing in higher educational institutions and how we might work to support it. Positive

psychological approaches focus on allowing the individual student to excel through an emphasis on personal strengths (Williams, Horrell, Edmiston, and Brady, 2018; Seldon & Martin, 2018). The main principles of positive education included in the toolkit are proactivity, rather than reactivity, inclusivity of all students, promoting student active engagement and control and building their confidence and capacity (Seldon & Martin, 2018).

We hope the toolkit will allow you to examine, reflect upon and develop your own mental health and wellbeing practice in your higher educational institution.

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