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# REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

| **Subject:**<br>Student Mental Health Agreement<br>Student Partnership Agreement | **Purpose:**<br>**For Approval** ☒<br>**For Discussion** ☐<br>**For Information** ☐ |
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| **Prepared by:** P McNeill | **Date: 23/02/22** |

**Purpose:** To agree how Borders College and Borders College Students' Association (BCSA) will share priorities and promote student mental health.

**Linked to Strategic Ambition: Proactively engage with our community and stakeholders to ensure our practice reflects their needs**

**Performance Measures: Engaged & empowered staff and student body**

**Linked to Strategic Risk Register: New Risk (outwith themes)**

**New Risk Commentary:**

**Executive Summary:**

The main items to note:

Borders College and Borders College Students' Association (BCSA) will work together to promote their common values and to achieve their shared priorities for the academic year 2021-2022.

The Student Mental Health Agreement will:

- Ensure a range of wellbeing support options are accessible to students on the student portal
- Provide responsibility to develop and implement activities to support improved mental health and wellbeing
- Promote the Big White Wall as a self-help resource for students
- Develop a student mental health forum to drive improvements in local mental health support

**Recommendation:**
For the committee to approve the content of these agreements.

**Previous Committee Approvals:**
Student Mental Health Agreement NO
Student Partnership Agreement YES

| **For publication** ☐ | **For publication with redactions** ☐ | **Not for publication** ☐ |
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# Student Partnership Agreement 2021-2022

Agreed between Borders College and
Borders College Students' Association

BORDERS
COLLEGE
STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION

## Section A – The Agreement

### Introduction

Borders College and Borders College Students' Association (BCSA) will work together to promote their common values and to achieve their shared priorities for the academic year 2021-2022.

The agreement demonstrates the relationship between the College and BCSA, and our commitment to developing a strong and effective Students' Association, as set out in the 'Framework for Development of Effective Student Associations' (Scottish Funding Council, 2015).

### Why a Partnership?

The idea of 'partnership' reflects a cooperative working relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff. By working together, we can make sure the college experience is improved in a way that works well for everyone.

Our partnership working is based on the values of:

- Openness
- Trust and Honesty
- Shared goals and values
- Effective communication between partners

### The Role of BCSA

BCSA is the primary champion of the student voice. BCSA works with the college to improve the student experience.

BCSA is made up of:

- Its members; all students enrolled at Borders College
- An Executive Team of elected Student Officers
- A team of unelected voluntary Student Officers
- The Student Experience Committee, chaired by the Student President and including student and staff representatives

### The Role of Borders College

Borders College supports BCSA to represent students' views and makes sure that students have a say in how the college runs. As outlined in the Code of Good Governance (2016), the College commits to supporting the Students' Association in the following ways:

- Making sure the student experience is central to all Board decisions
- Working with the Students' Association to understand the quality of the student experience
- Getting feedback from students before important decisions are made
- Giving BCSA the support needed to become strong, autonomous and adequately resourced
- Helping BCSA to run in a fair and democratic way which fulfils its responsibilities
- Making sure partnership procedures between the College and BCSA are put in place in order to achieve change for students

**Opportunities for Students to Influence College Life**

As a student, being involved in decision-making within the college is the most effective way to improve the student experience. The College and BCSA will work together to promote opportunities for students to get involved in shaping and influencing college life. These include:

- Giving honest and constructive feedback by taking part in surveys, focus groups and other informal discussions.
- Speaking to a course tutor or Curriculum Learning Manager (CLM) directly
- Sharing views with student representatives
- Standing to be a Student Officer or student representative

**Section B – Priorities for 2021-2022**

The Student Partnership Agreement will be overseen by a working group that includes Students' Association and College representatives. The College and BCSA are agreeing to work together on three priority areas in 2020-2021 as outlined below:

**Improving Communication**
Student feedback tells us that ineffective communication can be a barrier to engagement for some of our most vulnerable students. We have a responsibility to communicate clearly with students so they get the best out of their college experience. We should also provide regular opportunities for students to share their feedback with us. Where possible, this feedback should lead to change.

We will make sure that:

- Important information is communicated clearly to students
- Students have the chance to feedback directly to college managers
- Information that affects the student experience is accessible to everyone

**Increasing Student Wellbeing**
Covid-19 has had a major impact on mental health and wellbeing. The WHO report the main psychological impact of the pandemic has been increased levels of stress and anxiety, although rates of loneliness and depression are also rising. Based on national research and results from college surveys, we know that particular groups of students are more likely to experience poor mental health. Over the next year BCSA and the college will work in partnership to:

- Create a Student Mental Health Agreement with measurable outcomes
- Provide opportunities for students to participate in inclusive physical activity both during, and out with, their lessons.
- Develop projects that will improve the wellbeing of disabled and LGBT+ students

**Developing Community**
Research has shown that a sense of belonging can improve wellbeing and mental health. In a largely digital environment where students may be experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness, it is important we create ways for students to become part of a College community. Borders College and BCSA will work to;

- Deliver inclusive student events and activities
- Encourage students to set up student-led groups to increase the opportunities for students to create new friendships

**Signed**

*S Prentice*

Sally Prentice
**Student President**

A Cox

Angela Cox
**Principal**

# Borders College Student Mental Health Agreement 2021-22

1. **We will develop and implement ongoing campaigns to promote wellbeing and raise awareness of mental health challenges relevant to students.**

   These events and activities will encourage students to engage in open dialogue about mental health, access support services and learn about the benefits of mental health self-management. Events will be coordinated by the Students' Association in partnership with the college where participation from students and staff is expected. This will work towards a college environment of understanding, support and acceptance.

   **Actions to be taken:**
   - Complete a mapping exercise to identify key issues faced by students throughout the year
   - Contact organisations and individuals who are able to support activity identified through mapping exercise
   - Develop and implement proposed activities
   - Liaise with Mental Health Wellbeing Officer to provide additional support for the development and delivery of activities

2. **Provide training opportunities to enhance the capacity of staff and student representatives to identify and support students who are experiencing mental ill-health.**

   Training will aid the development of a consistent approach to providing mental health support, ensuring that all students have positive experiences when making disclosures to staff.

   **Actions to be taken:**
   - Online mental health modules to be made available to all staff within the suite of Engage induction modules
   - Make Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training available to all staff.
   - Organise Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training for Wellbeing Class Representatives.
   - Develop policy to provide guidance for staff supporting transgender and gender diverse students

3. **Focus on preventative aspects of mental health and wellbeing to raise overall awareness of mental health issues and help students self-manage their mental health.**

   By creating opportunities for students to access information, skills and techniques that can prevent or alleviate the impact of mental ill-health we aim to build a more resilient and independent student community.

   **Actions to be taken:**

   - Ensure a range of wellbeing support options are accessible to students on the student portal
   - Recruitment of Mental Health Wellbeing Officer with responsibility to develop and implement activities to support improved mental health and wellbeing
   - Promote the Big White Wall as a self-help resource for students
   - Develop a student mental health forum to drive improvements in local mental health support

Sally Prentice
Student President

Angela Cox
Principal

| Not started | Complete | Progressing to plan | Some slippage but will be complete by August 2023 | Will not be complete by August 2023 |
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| Action | Responsibility | Progress | Detail |
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| **Develop and implement ongoing campaigns to promote wellbeing and raise awareness of mental health challenges relevant to students** | | | |
| Complete a mapping exercise to identify key issues faced by students throughout the year | P McNeill | | **February Update:** Big Student Satisfaction surveys completed for Terms 1 and 2. Stage 1 student complaints have been reviewed. Pilot early intervention project for students on Passport to College course has started. This will feed into mapping exercise.<br><br>Wellbeing Reps completed mapping exercise as part of their introductory training |
| Contact organisations and individuals who are able to support activity identified through mapping exercise | S Prentice | | |
| Develop and implement proposed activities | P McNeill / S Prentice | | |
| Liaise with Mental Health Wellbeing Officer to provide additional support for the development and delivery of activities | S Prentice | | MHWO involved in the development/facilitation of mental health forum |
| **Provide training opportunities to enhance the capacity of staff and student representatives to identify and support students who are experiencing mental ill-health.** | | | |
| Online mental health modules to be made available to all staff within the suite of Engage induction modules | C. Nairn | | **February Update:** Currently available to all staff, we have just |

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| | | | renewed our contract so we will have access to these modules/any updates until July 2025<br><br>Additional mental health and wellbeing training now available through Skillsbooster elearning package |
| Make Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training available to all staff. | ABrydon/C Elliot | | **February Update:** Funding is secure for a further session aimed at Clare Nairn's Team who need to refresh their training (22nd May) This will be advertised in due course. The cost is £1760. Funding for an All Staff session needs to be agreed. |
| Provide Mental Health First Aid Training for Wellbeing Class Representatives. | A Brydon | | **February Update:** 36 Wellbeing Reps have been appointed, 28 have received training (78%).<br><br>To encourage ongoing engagement with the group a dedicated Teams page has been set up which also includes a range of support resources. |

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| | | | Monthly online drop in sessions have been scheduled covering a range of topics including self-care and networking sessions. These are supported by BCSA, EDI Officer and Mental Health Team.<br><br>Free Mental Health First Aid Training is sometimes delivered through 3rd sector organisations. These opportunities are shared with wellbeing reps as and when they come up |
| Develop policy to provide guidance for staff supporting transgender and gender diverse students | A Brydon | | Ongoing. Plans to work with LGBT Youth to develop guidance. Current LGBT guidance has been shared with relevant staff. |
| **Focus on preventative aspects of mental health and wellbeing to raise overall awareness of mental health issues and help students self-manage their mental health.** | | | |
| Ensure a range of wellbeing support options are accessible to students on the student portal | BCSA/Student Services | | Information available in the BCSA and Student Services sections. |
| Recruitment of Mental Health Wellbeing Officer with responsibility to develop and implement activities to support improved mental health and wellbeing. | C. Nairn | | Complete |

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| Promote the Big White Wall as a self-help resource for students | BCSA/Student Services/C Reith | ■ | BWW promoted regularly on social media/staff regularly signpost to students. |
| Investigate the opportunity to deliver a suite of mental health self-management courses | | ➡ | Resources available through Big White Wall/NUS/NHS<br><br>Exploring delivery of 'Bloom' mental health resources covering topics such as resilience, study skills, managing stress etc. Once staff have received Bloom training they are able to access the teaching resources. |
| Develop a student mental health forum to drive improvements in local mental health support | A Letham | ➡ | Advertised forum to students to identify representatives Student President working with MHO to develop initiatives for students<br><br>EDI Officer and student services team meet regularly with Scottish Borders Councils 'Joint Health Improvement team' to consider more joined up approaches to addressing wellbeing and suicide prevention. |
| Deliver a range of wellbeing initiatives in conjunction with Borders College Students' Association | Student Services | ■ | Student Services team attend equalities |

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| | | | calendar meetings to develop wellbeing activities linked to key equalities themes. Involvement at all BCSA wellbeing events e.g. Smash the Stigma, Tiny Changes<br><br>Andy's Man Club x 2 sessions delivered in November 2021. Open to staff and students. |