

University of Chester

**- One university, one approach to health,
well-being and sustainability -**

Our intention is to:



Adopt a whole university approach to health, well-being and sustainability to make working and studying at the University a positive and rewarding experience

Ensure our community is safe and measures are in place to protect the health, safety and welfare of our staff, students and visitors



Provide a centralised, focused resource, the 'Healthy Chester' hub, designed to draw together the various initiatives which will be informed and underpinned by best practice

Develop policies and practices that promote and support health, well-being and sustainability



Facilitate a culture of openness where voice is valued

Provide opportunities, activities and support aimed at encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own health, well-being and lifestyle choices

Create a greater sense of belonging, collegiality and common purpose through our shared values

Signpost staff and students to contacts, resources and other sources of information and help



University of
Chester

Chester — a Healthy University

Our ambition

The University of Chester aspires to become a [Healthy University¹](#), committed to ‘creating a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health, well-being and sustainability of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential’.

Adopting a [‘whole university’](#) approach to health, well-being and sustainability can realise a raft of benefits including a more motivated, productive and supported workforce, reduced costs associated with sickness absence, an enhanced student experience and improved student retention.

The [‘whole university’](#) approach is designed to support the University's Mission, Vision and Foundational Values by setting out a positive, holistic approach to supporting and promoting the physical, mental and social health and well-being of members of our community. Factors such as environment, income, relationships, behaviour and lifestyle and other choices all have an impact upon the positive health and well-being of both staff and students. As such, we aim to foster an environment in which staff and students, through accessing the support, training and resources they need, are enabled and supported to take responsibility for their own health, well-being, lifestyle and other choices.



The University's Mission, Vision and Foundational Values

Mission: The University, a Church of England Institution founded in 1839, continues to be guided by Christian values and is justifiably proud of the open, inclusive and supportive environment that characterises the institution. The University welcomes students and staff of all faiths or none. The University seeks to provide of all its students and staff with the education, skills, support and motivation to enable them to develop as confident world citizens so that they may serve and improve the global communities within which they live and work. This Mission, which has helped shape its development and diversification, continues to actively inform its future planning and enrichment as a University.

Vision: At the heart of the University's vision is an unwavering commitment to ensuring a rewarding student learning experience, developing the expertise of staff, providing teaching excellence, and actively growing its research and scholarly profile. Through these actions, the University hopes to make a positive impact on the lives of students, staff and the community all of which underpin the institution's significant and growing contribution to the region and beyond. In valuing and celebrating its long history and traditions, the University is committed to engendering a sense of pride and shared ownership in all that it does.

Foundational Values: Mindful of its history and Christian foundation the University recognises:

- the dignity and worth of every individual
- the vital role of education in the service of society
- the inherent value of the pursuit of truth and freedom of enquiry



Our Healthy University

Some helpful definitions

Well-being: *“A state of equilibrium or balance that can be affected by life events or challenges” (Dodge et al, 2012²).*

Mental health and mental well-being: We all understand the concept of physical health and just as we all have physical health, we all have mental health too. How we feel can vary from having good mental well-being, which means we have the ability to cope with the normal, day to day stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, interact positively with others, make a contribution to our community and realise our potential. Poor mental health is the inability to do these things. For many of us there have been times in our lives when we have struggled with difficult experiences and difficult feelings and emotions but if these feelings persist over a long period of time and impact upon our ability to live our lives in the way we want to then it is definitely time for us to seek help.



Wellness: is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life. It is more than being free from illness, It is a dynamic process of change and growth. “..a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (TWHO⁵). “..a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential” (The National Wellness Institute⁶). “The state of being in good health, especially as an actively pursued goal” (Oxford English Dictionary⁷).

Whole university: an approach which permeates every aspect of the University and is embedded across all policies, cultures, curriculum and practices¹.



What can we do as individuals?

The 5 Ways to Well-being

Research⁸ suggests that there are 5 steps that we can all take to improve our well-being and in doing so make us feel happier, more positive and more productive: **Connect**, **Be active**, **Be mindful**, **Keep learning** and **Give to others**. The 5 Ways to Well-being are currently promoted by the University through all of its the Health4All activities.

This initiative requires staff to take a proactive approach towards their own wellness and so in order to support this the University needs to ensure that it is able to provide effective leadership and an environment which enable this.

Connect...

Connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships as building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Exercising makes you feel good. Discover an activity that you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness, make it part of your life.

Be mindful...

Be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Mindfulness can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Keep learning...

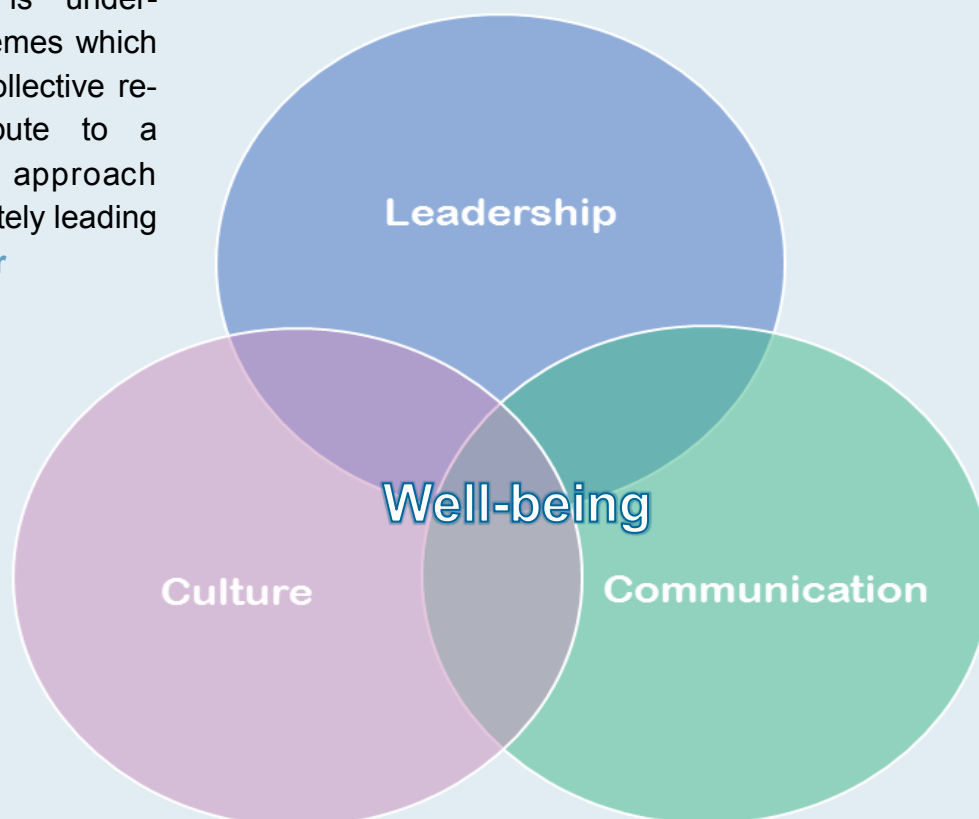
Try something new or rediscover an old interest. Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence as well as being fun.

Give to others...

Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering, can improve your mental well-being and help build new social networks.

Our Healthy University Framework

This Framework⁹ is underpinned by 3 key themes which together, through collective responsibility, contribute to a **'whole university'** approach to well-being, ultimately leading to a **Healthy Chester**



Key Themes:

Leadership

- The University's Senior Leaders believe in the value of and actively support a **'whole university'** approach to health, well-being and sustainability
- Collaboration between colleagues across the University who are engaged in supporting health, well-being and sustainability activity is actively encouraged
- Key, institutional health, well-being and sustainability priorities are identified and an action plan developed and resourced
- The Plan is monitored and its impact reviewed over time

Culture

- Embed health, well-being and sustainability into all policies, procedures and practices as well as all aspects of University life
- Foster awareness of wellness through the 5 ways to well-being
- Ensure staff and students feel supported and valued by the University whilst understanding their responsibility for taking care of themselves and making appropriate lifestyle choices
- Ensure everyone has access to the activities, initiatives and resources provided
- Promote work/life balance

Communication

- Effective communication of the **'whole university'** approach together with other health, well-being and sustainability initiatives
- Coordinate, develop and promote activities, initiatives and resources through the central resource hub: **'Healthy Chester'**
- Ensure everyone feels included and involved
- Open up a dialogue about health, well-being and sustainability issues
- Connect with other HEIs and external agencies in order to learn from good practice

Our Healthy University

References

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- 2 Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), 222-235.
- 3 Oxford English Dictionary. 2018. *Definition of well-being in English*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/well-being>. [Accessed 9 February 2018].
- 4 World Health Organisation. 2018. *Mental health: a state of well-being*. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/. [Accessed 9 February 2018].
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