BIMM UNIVERSITY

A university for the creative industries

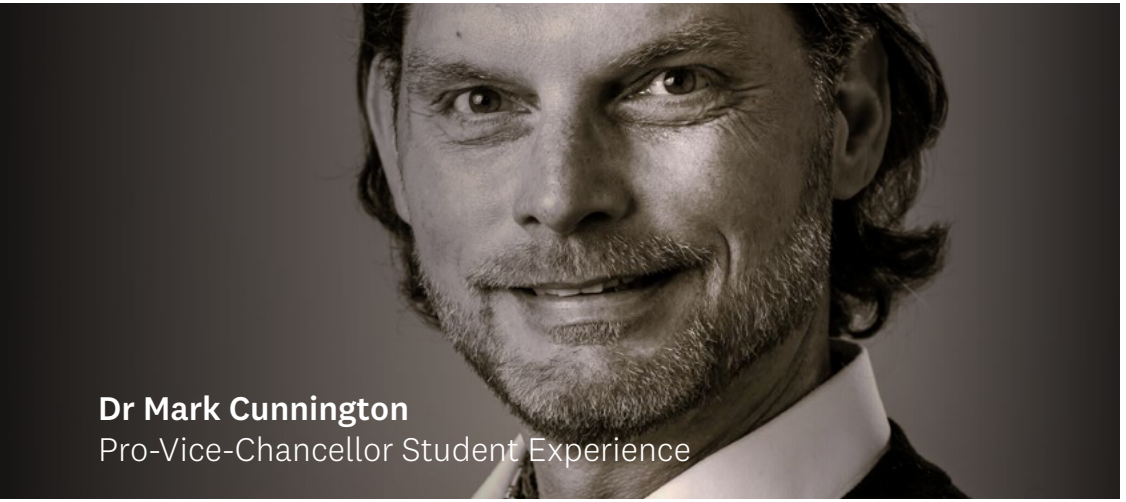


STUDENT WELLBEING STRATEGY

2024/27

London | Berlin | Dublin | Manchester | Bristol | Brighton | Birmingham | Essex

Introduction



At BIMM University, we attract students from across the world, to our campuses in the UK and Europe. They come to us for the opportunity to learn, develop skills, explore new ideas, develop friendships, and find opportunities within the creative industries.

To support their ambitions, we understand the importance of creating an environment where they can thrive, and that is why we prioritise student mental health and wellbeing using a structured and holistic approach. By fostering collaboration, transparency, and ongoing improvement, we aim to create a supportive environment where every student feels heard, supported, and able to thrive academically and personally.

The rising tide of concern about mental health and wellbeing is widely recognised. These concerns are felt across the education sector, the workplace and throughout society. We know that poor mental health and wellbeing can be a huge barrier to student success, and we are determined to address this head on, developing a university community in which mental health is everyone's business.

While this Student Wellbeing strategy seeks to set our direction, priorities, and goals, for the next three academic years from 2024, it of course builds on the wide range of high-quality work that already exists across BIMM University and is something that we will continue to refresh and extend, in order to remain appropriate.

It deliberately focuses on both mental health and wellbeing, which are intrinsically linked. It is crucial that we deliver support and advice across both. This includes how we boost students' wellbeing and support their resilience, as well as how we identify those with more complex mental health problems where more specialist support is required.

A key element of our strategy will be effective signposting onto relevant external services. So, for example, for our UK campuses that will particularly be the National Health Service (NHS), the primary provider of mental health services in the UK.

The equivalent for students at our Dublin campus is the Health Service Executive (HSE). In Germany, there is a diverse and extensive psychiatric care system which students at our Berlin campus can access through their health insurance.

The focus is on understanding the challenges faced by students during their academic journey (including, for example, isolation, mental health, cost of living etc.), and on developing solutions that address these challenges.

By working together across the University to identify, implement and continually evaluate actions that put student mental health and wellbeing at the forefront, we will enhance the overall student experience and help to improve attendance, retention, engagement, and progression. We want to do all we can to equip our students to stay on course, achieve and progress.

A detailed set of priorities and goals have been drawn up so that we can turn strategy into a reality and deliver against our commitments.

The ownership of this strategy will come under the remit of the University's Student Experience Committee, with progress against our actions and goals will be regularly reviewed in line with best practice and understanding of mental health and wellbeing, which continue to evolve.

Let's create a healthier, and an ever more inclusive BIMM together.

Dr Mark Cunnington
Pro-Vice-Chancellor Student Experience

Introduction



“Positive Vibes Only” is an unrealistic expectation. Humans possess a wide spectrum of emotions that are both natural and acceptable.

BIMM University’s community represents a fusion of creatives across music, film, and performing arts. Its unique value lies in its international and diverse composition. Beyond the conventional notion of a university, BIMM serves as a hub for education, opportunity, skill development, and collaborative creative practice.

Many of us have undertaken the commendable endeavour of stepping out of our comfort zones in pursuit of our aspirations and dreams. This courageous decision, involving sacrifices such as leaving behind friends, family, and home, is highly commendable. Opting for a creative path is something we all should be proud of as it involves transforming passion into a profession in its true essence. While this journey is undoubtedly rewarding, it also presents challenges that may evoke feelings of stress and anxiety. As an international student myself, I resonate with the concerns shared by many, including worries about academic commitments and future career prospects in the creative industry. Balancing academic responsibilities, professional aspirations, financial budgeting, and social life can be daunting, requiring support to manage this multifaceted workload.

In the words of Michelle Obama, just as we wouldn’t dismiss someone with a broken leg or shame someone seeking treatment for an ear infection, mental health conditions should be treated with equal compassion and understanding.

Encouragingly, efforts to address such concerns and promote overall well-being should be the highest priority.

The dedicated efforts of the student experience and well-being teams, in collaboration with other departments such as careers, examinations, and events teams, underscore BIMM University’s commitment to providing comprehensive support from the moment students choose to join BIMM. Central to the mission is ensuring students’ academic fulfilment and their overall university experience meet or exceed their expectations.

Recognizing that a student’s academic success, physical and mental well-being, and personal growth are profoundly shaped by their university experience, the new strategies focus on fostering an inclusive, supportive, and enriching environment. By implementing additional practices aimed at cultivating a sense of involvement, fostering collaboration, and creating a safe space, we aim to enhance the overall student experience.

Believing that with the collective efforts of staff and students, the Student Experience Committee can identify key concerns and work towards implementing operations to deliver an excellent experience for all while also prioritizing the overall well-being of everyone. By actively incorporating feedback from the community, organising engaging events, and fostering collaboration among students, we are dedicated to continuous improvement. As co-chair of the student experience committee, I am eager to receive your opinions and work towards achieving our shared goals, ultimately benefiting the entire BIMM community.

I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a healthier, more inclusive community at BIMM University.

Sincerely,

Aiman Khan
Student co-chair


MUSIC | FILM | PERFORMING ARTS | CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY


SCREEN AND FILM SCHOOL
MUSIC | FILM | PERFORMING ARTS | CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

External Statement of Support

Phil Packer MBE (Mil)
HonDHSc Hon DUniv (BNU) FRSA,
Founder and Non-Paid Chief Executive
of the British Inspiration Trust

The British Inspiration Trust (BRIT) is a collaborative charity that exists to support and improve the mental health, fitness, and wellbeing, of young adults, students, and staff, throughout the UK.

BRIT aspires be an integral part of sustained change within the Education Sector and we will continue to act as both an enabler and offer the annual inclusive BRIT Challenge as a catalyst to improve mental health, fitness, and wellbeing. Over the past four years, over 530 universities, colleges, Students' Unions, and specialist colleges, have taken part in our BRIT Challenges and this would not have been possible without the volunteer support of staff and students who have coordinated the BRIT Challenge at their institutions.

I am delighted that BIMM University have embraced the BRIT Challenge and understand that at the heart of all we do as a charity is our vision to:

• Improve the wellbeing of students and staff of all abilities.
• Champion inclusion.
• Complement existing University, College, Specialist College, and SU, Health and Wellbeing Strategies.
• Inspire volunteering and fundraising throughout the UK and assist with social good.

In addition to student and staff engagement in the annual BRIT Challenge, I look forward to exploring other innovative ways we can support the BIMM University Student Wellbeing Strategy's Priorities and Strategic Goals.

I am delighted that BRIT and BIMM University have forged a special relationship and am committed to doing my utmost to ensure we can have a positive impact on assisting with improving the wellbeing of students and staff by, for example, exploring research and enterprise opportunities, offering BRIT Course Projects for students to be integral to how our charity operates, offering Work Placements (based on campuses) for students to gain lived-experience in meaningful ways, and delivering talks to students and staff on mental health, wellbeing, inclusivity, volunteering, and community engagement.



Background

Mental ill health is recognised as one of the biggest health issues of our time, and it's an issue that requires a specific focus and response from universities.

Increasing proportions of students are arriving at university with diagnosed mental health conditions, and many more have undiagnosed lower-level mental health needs. Many people only disclose their mental health condition once they arrive at university. In the UK, the proportion of home students (students who normally live in the UK) who disclosed a mental health condition to their university in 2020/21 was nearly seven times as high as a decade earlier. In a 2022 survey by the mental health charity Student Minds, 57% of respondents self-reported a mental health issue.

There are similar concerns about student mental ill health, mental distress, and low wellbeing in Ireland, where a 2019 study found there had been a 127% increase in students registered with disability services for mental health over the previous five years (AHEAD 2019). The Higher Education Authority's (HEA) National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Frameworks (2020) noted that Ireland has one of the highest rates of mental illness in Europe with 18.5% of the population recorded as having a mental health condition such as anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia, depression or alcohol or drug misuse.

In Germany, a Student Wellbeing Study conducted at five universities in 2021 found that 42% of students felt down, depressed or hopeless and 45% said they felt nervous, anxious or 'on edge' several days per week. However, only 7% had utilised counselling services.

According to the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, factors that contribute to students having poor mental health include moving away from home, academic and financial pressures, and the absence of familiar social and emotional support networks.

COVID-19 has also brought unprecedented disruption and significant challenges in relation to mental health, particularly for young people who faced such challenges during a critical and transitionary time in their lives. Office for National Statistics data shows that during the pandemic, students reported higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of happiness than the general population. Many students have also said the rising cost of living has negatively affected their mental health

The consequences of mental health issues for students range from poor academic performance and dropping out of university, to self-harm and suicide. (This strategy should be read in conjunction with BIMM's Suicide Safer Strategy and Action Plan.)

National Guidance

In the last few years, there have been many frameworks, codes and structures published across the higher education network in the UK to encourage a whole university approach to mental health and wellbeing. There are also many general codes published, such as the NHS Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing and Mind's 5 Ways to Wellbeing.

In Ireland, the Higher Education Authority published its National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework in 2020 with the aim of addressing the issues of student mental health and suicide prevention in a structured and planned way.

In December 2019, the University Mental Health Charter was published in the UK and is a set of principles can adopt to improve the mental health and wellbeing of their communities.

BIMM has signed up to the charter programme and a key component of this strategy will be to ensure that we are working together to fulfil the Principles of Good Practice laid out in the framework. It will be a journey of continuous improvement.

STRATEGIC GOALS

AND

OUR PRIORITIES

Wellbeing Leadership

STRATEGIC GOAL

To lead a whole community approach to wellbeing

There will be clear articulation by senior leadership that mental health and wellbeing are a strategic priority at BIMM University within an inclusive, respectful and compassionate environment that supports our students throughout their studies.

OUR PRIORITIES

- **Overall responsibility for wellbeing:** The Executive Management team will take overall responsibility for the proactive implementation of processes, resources and tools that support a mentally healthy university, acting as role models and advocates for the implementation and success of our strategy.

- **Awareness of wellbeing developments:** We will ensure that senior managers in all departments are aware of the mental health and wellbeing work that is being carried out, and that they are involved in the review and development of mental health and wellbeing services.

- **Support for managers:** We will work to ensure that managers are properly trained to allow quality conversations on mental health and wellbeing issues and, where appropriate, to signpost to further support.

- **Student Minds Mental Health Charter:** We will commit to taking the actions need to fulfil the Principles of Good Practice laid out in the Mental Health Charter framework.

- **Adequate Resources:** We will ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for initiatives focused on improving student mental health and wellbeing and will continuously review and evaluate its services to better meet the needs of our students.





Transitions for students that support Wellbeing

STRATEGIC GOAL

To create a seamless, supportive experience for students at every stage of their academic journey

By tailoring support, and enhancing communication, we will support and guide our students as they enter, develop within, and graduate from BIMM University.

OUR PRIORITIES

• **Communication with new starters:** We will communicate with new students before they arrive, sharing comprehensive information about available support services, both internal and external, to enable a smooth induction into university life and to ensure students know where to turn when in need.

• **Individualised support:** We recognise that our students form a diverse community with a range of lived experiences, backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities. We will provide targeted, individualised support, resources, advice and networks, as we will towards removing barriers or access and will ensure we do all we can to support those students who may find transitions particularly challenging.

• **Support for returners and transfers:** We will highlight support available to students returning from time away from the University, such as intermission or who have transferred from one campus to another.

• **Support during on-course transitions:** We will review the support given to students at other key times (for example, transition into a new academic year; transition between semesters; and in the lead-up to assessment periods).

• **Support for post university transition:** Our commitment to student wellbeing extends beyond our current students' time at the university. We will provide clear information about external services and the support options available after they leave the university.

Early intervention

STRATEGIC GOAL

To break the stigma and promote open dialogue

Through proactive, cross organisation campaigns, we will address barriers and foster a community where everyone feels comfortable discussing mental health concerns in order to dismantle the stigma around seeking mental health support.

OUR PRIORITIES

• **Increased understanding:** We will increase understanding of mental health and wellbeing across our community.

Our students will be well-informed about where to seek help from within the university, as well as external services and partner institutions.

• **Early disclosure of mental health challenges:** We will advocate for students to disclose mental health difficulties before arriving at the university and provide opportunities for face-to-face disclosure within the induction period. This will enable us to prepare and design bespoke support packages to ensure students are able to achieve to their full potential.

• **Encouraging openness:** We will support students to share experiences of mental health throughout their period of study and create an open and supportive culture through campaigns and activities that promote a culture of mental wellness.

• **Providing proactive support:** All staff in student-facing roles will be supported and encouraged to create an environment where students feel known, welcomed, and supported. Proactively guiding students to appropriate support resources will be a priority.

• **Revise and redesign Student at Risk (SARC) process:** We will create a streamlined, consistent, and easier to use process enabling earlier intervention and actions for students at risk - with ongoing monitoring and audit of compliance.

• **Effective support policies and processes:** We will capture and share information about student engagement with their studies where appropriate, ensuring effective policies, processes, and systems are in place to support students effectively. For example, Student at Risk, Fitness to Study and Mitigating and Exceptional Circumstances processes.





Proactive Mental Fitness

STRATEGIC GOAL

To embed prevention at the core of our strategy

We will empower every individual to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially by creating a nurturing environment that promotes healthy behaviour, prioritises mental health and wellbeing, and supports students throughout their journey.

OUR PRIORITIES

• **Promoting student wellbeing in academic settings:** We will embed mental health considerations into the curriculum, assessments, and academic year structure.

• **Building confidence and relationships through extra-curricular activities:** Working with BIMM Student Association and Student Reps, we will offer a diverse range of extra-curricular activities that promote wellbeing and enable students to build confidence and meaningful networks. These activities might include societies, social events, community engagement, sports clubs, and opportunities for physical activity. We will commit to identifying and eliminating barriers that may hinder underrepresented groups from engaging in these activities.

• **Reducing financial stress:** We recognise the potential impact of financial stress on student mental health and wellbeing. To address this, we will actively promote access to budgeting advice and hardship funding, where available.

• **Empowering students with wellbeing information:** To encourage students to take charge of their own wellbeing, we will provide proactive information and advice to help them understand and manage their mental and physical health effectively.

• **Support for alcohol and drug use:** Our commitment to student wellbeing extends to harm reduction from alcohol, drug and other substance misuse. We will offer comprehensive advice and interventions, making sure there are no barriers to students seeking support when needed.

• **Supporting survivors of sexual violence and promoting Consent Culture:** We are dedicated to providing support and guidance for students who have experienced sexual violence. Through initiatives and clear reporting procedures, we will work to ensure a healthy culture of consent on our campuses.

Effective Wellbeing and Student Support Services

STRATEGIC GOAL

To provide accessible, resilient and flexible support services

We will promote the delivery of effective mental health and wellbeing support services to ensure timely support.

OUR PRIORITIES

• **Accessible and welcoming support services:** Our support services will be designed to be easily accessible and inclusive. Through feedback from underrepresented groups and training for our staff, we will ensure culturally appropriate support.

• **Empowering peer support programmes:** We will develop quality peer support programmes that empower students to take care of their own wellbeing and support their peers.

• **Signposting onto specialised support:** For those students with more complex or specialised challenges, we help them to access services offered externally and signpost onto other appropriate agencies.

• **Regular review:** We will review our mental health and wellbeing support provision and its impact on a regular basis and adjust as needed.

Effective collaboration

STRATEGIC GOAL

To ensure a joined-up approach to wellbeing support.

We will identify and signpost links to resources and pathways to improve the experience of those using our services and provide pathways onto external services, making navigation easier for students.

OUR PRIORITIES

• **Collaborative services:** We will strengthen our collaboration across BIMM University, including between support services and academic schools; promote existing resources and work together on common initiatives which respond to the needs of our community.

• **Partnership with students and BIMM Student Association:** We will work closely with students to develop and implement our Student Wellbeing Strategy, ensuring that student voices are heard in decision-making processes through various communication channels.

• **Improved external partnerships:** We will develop and improve external partnerships with primary mental health services (ie the NHS, in the UK, and HSE in Ireland) and other organisations such as Berliner Krisendienst (Berlin Crisis Service) and mental health charities (for example, Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health in Ireland) to further support our community and share best practice.





Whole University approach

STRATEGIC GOAL

To build and maintain a supportive community that fosters a sense of belonging

We will ensure that staff are clear about roles and responsibilities; that they are well-informed and able to promote mental wellness as well as know where to direct students to appropriate advice and support.

OUR PRIORITIES

• **Comprehensive staff training:** We will offer appropriate training to staff to equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding of our diverse student body, prioritising areas that have the most significant impact on student wellbeing.

• **Recognise lecturers' contributions:** We will acknowledge the role of lecturers in supporting student wellbeing, ensuring they receive the guidance required to feel confident about how to respond when students raise wellbeing concerns.

• **Support staff wellbeing:** We will prioritise and give support to the wellbeing of our staff, ensuring they can thrive in their roles and provide support to students effectively.

• **Foster an open and supportive culture:** By engaging in joint campaigns and activities, staff and students will recognise shared experiences of mental health, promoting healthy behaviour and wellbeing.

• **Build positive relationships:** We will foster positive and supportive relationships between staff and students within academic schools, encouraging collaborative learning experiences, and community building activities to reduce isolation.

• **Warm welcome:** To build a culture of care and compassion from the outset, we will warmly welcome both new and returning students into our vibrant community. Through engaging activities, networks, and University-organised opportunities, students will be encouraged to form meaningful peer relationships and connections.

Data and Management Reporting

STRATEGIC GOAL

To continuously improve wellbeing support through evaluation

Through effective data evaluation and reporting, we will continuously improve our services, ensuring they are effective and impactful for students and therefore deliver a positive impact on attendance, retention, continuation, and achievement.

OUR PRIORITIES

- **Management Information systems and data reporting:** Timely management information reports are required to enable effective assessment of service delivery and impact on student retention, continuation, and progression.

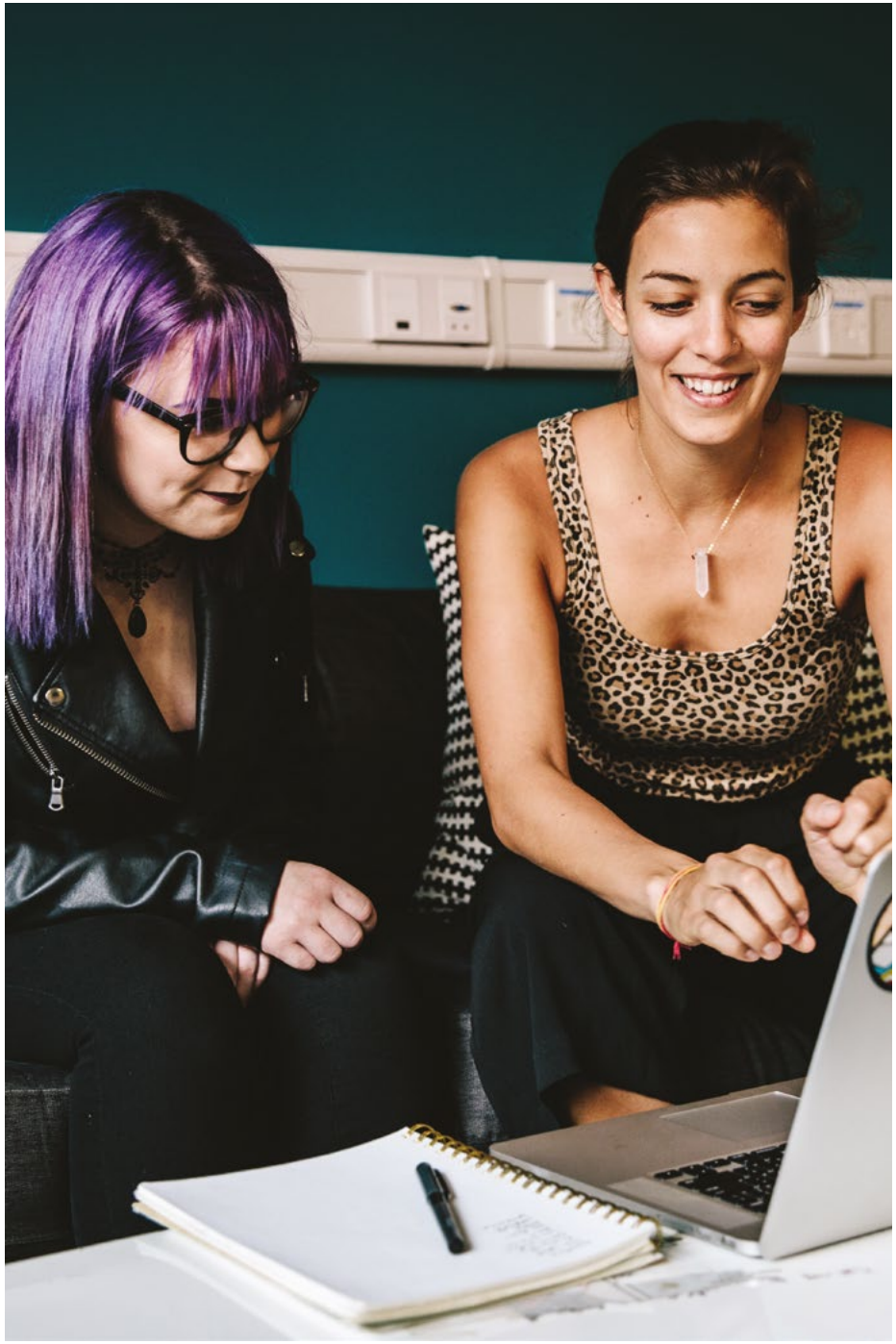
- **Transparency through action plans:** We will create and share clear annual action plans with measurable goals. Regular updates on progress will be communicated to the university community to maintain transparency.

- **Appropriate information sharing:** We will develop appropriate ways to share information across the university, enabling us to identify students in difficulty and develop a shared view of their needs.

- **Listen to the Student Voice:** We will work with students to prioritise their needs in designing our services, utilising various channels and methods to ensure diverse voices are heard.

- **Continuous quality improvement:** We will keep up to date with student mental health and wellbeing research to remain responsive to their needs and continuously enhance our services and interventions.

- **Continuous review and evaluation:** We will regularly review the action plan to ensure it remains effective and relevant and that it is meeting the needs of our students.



Developing an Action Plan

In consultation with our BIMM University community, we will develop an action plan in time for the start of the 2024/25 academic year, to begin delivering on this important strategy.

Our action plan will be proactive and focus on supporting mental wellness and resilience as well as addressing poor mental health. We will be informed by the latest research and will collaborate with our students and staff to agree a set of relevant and measurable actions and ensure alignment with other strategic activity.

Our measures of success will be both quantitative and qualitative in order to determine impact, and progress towards the commitments that we have made.

If you have any comments, feedback or suggestions on the Student Wellbeing Strategy, please contact the **Head of Student Wellbeing** or your local campus **Student Wellbeing team**.

Measures of success may include, for example:

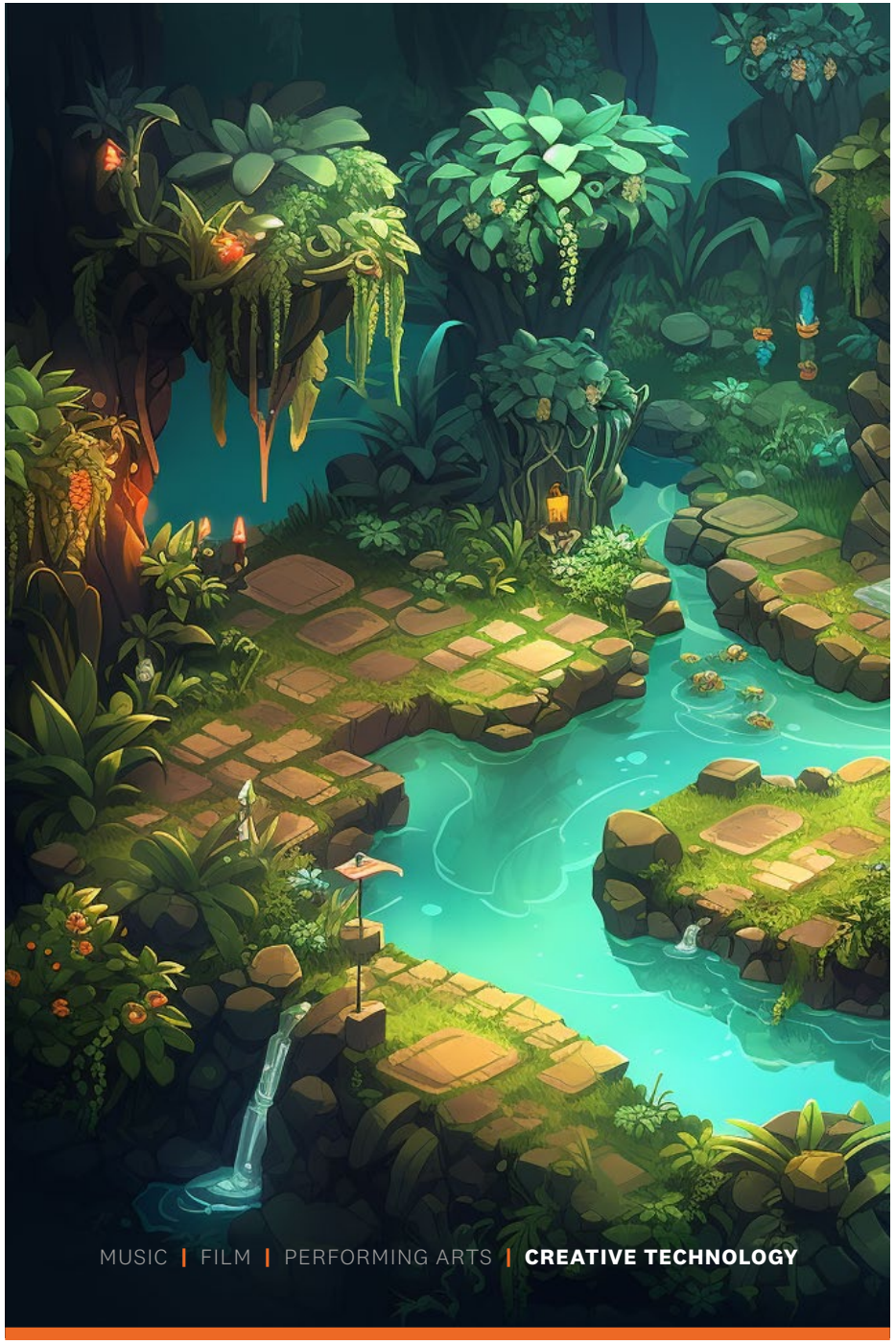
- A year-on-year increase in the percentage of final year students on HE courses at BIMM campuses in the UK who say that information about mental wellbeing support services was well communicated (National Student Survey).
- An increase in the percentage of students with a declared mental health condition at our UK campuses who apply for Disabled Students' Allowance.
- A year-on-year increase in sign-ups across our campuses of staff and students participating in the annual BRITchallenge, with the aim of destigmatising mental health.

- A reduction in the percentage of students who cite 'mental health' as their main reason for leaving BIMM University during their course (as measured by the annual Savanta Student Retention Survey).
- A reduction in the percentage of female students reporting feelings of loneliness, stress and being overwhelmed (as measured by the annual Savanta Student Retention Survey).

- Engaging with the University Mental Health Charter programme with the aim of applying for the Award during the period of this strategy.
- Engaging an external provider to offer out of hours mental health support.
- Feedback from staff which indicates they feel they have received appropriate training for their roles with regard to support student wellbeing.
- Using BIMM University feedback systems to measure changes in student views about our progress in meeting our stated goals.

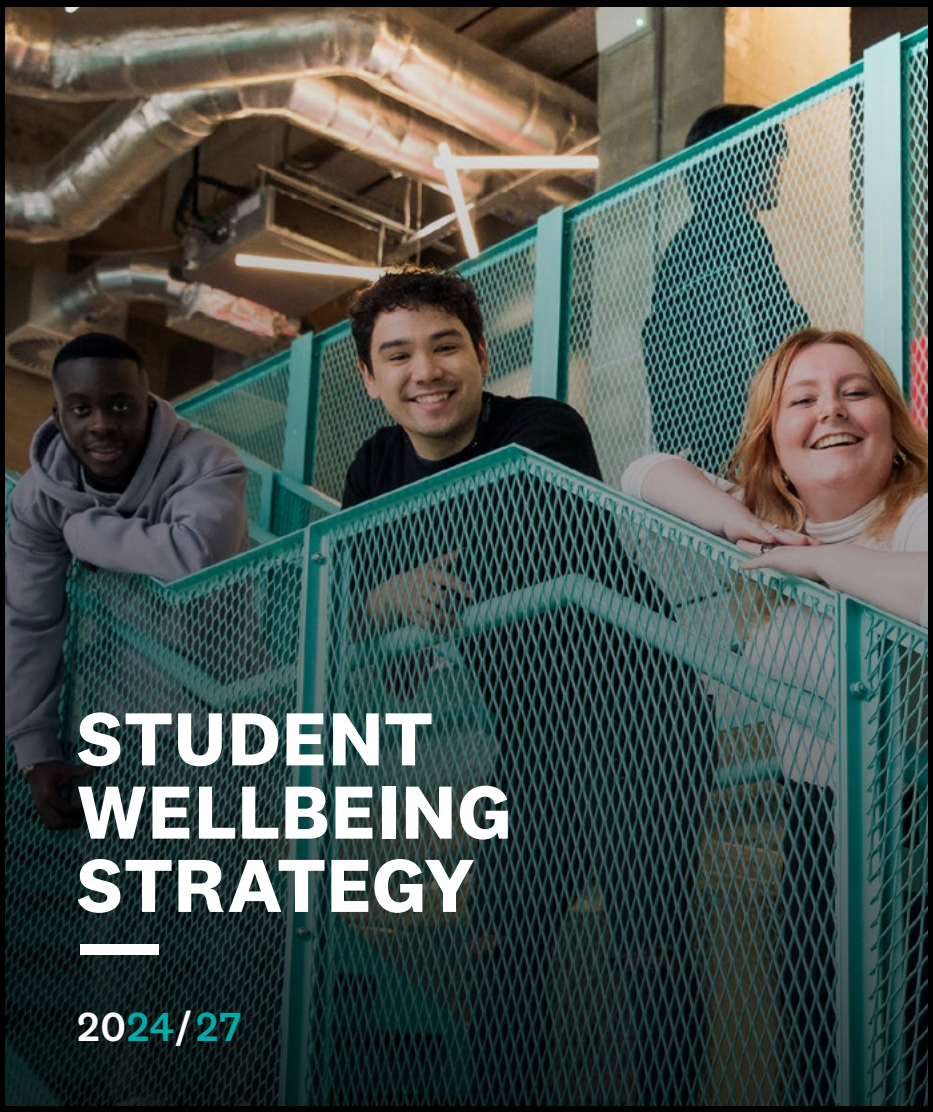
- Benchmarking our performance against standards for the UK higher education sector.
- Improved academic progression trends for those students who declare they have a mental health condition.
- The Executive Management team receiving quarterly reports on the health of the student body.


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