

April 2025 update from Professor Edward Peck, Higher Education Student Support Champion

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to my termly update on my progress as Higher Education Student Support Champion and Chair of the Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce.

Competency Framework

The Taskforce, in partnership with AdvanceHE, has published a [Competency Framework](#) to support staff in responding to students in distress. This framework acknowledges that not all students seek help through formal support services; instead, many turn to trusted individuals, such as lecturers, personal tutors, departmental administrators and accommodation staff when facing personal difficulties.

Until now, there has been no standardised guidance outlining the key competencies required by non-specialist, student-facing staff. This framework addresses that gap, offering a structure to help HEPs articulate the essential approaches, skills, and knowledge staff need to engage in student support both safely and confidently.

I encourage HEPs to consider how they can embed this framework into their institutional approaches to staff training and development. The framework aligns with the principles of the University Mental Health Charter, particularly its emphasis on mental health training for staff in non-clinical roles. We have also worked collaboratively with sector organisations – including UKAT, CUBO, SEDA and AMOSSHE – to ensure the framework complements their initiatives.

Moreover, the framework is intended also to support your institution's approach to student disability, noting in particular the publication of the [EHRC advice note](#) on HEPs' requirements under the Equality Act and, more recently, the supplementary [HEPI blog](#) by Abigail Hamer – Legal Principal at the EHRC.

Additional outputs from the Taskforce will be published shortly; details to follow. In the meantime, you can view the outputs, papers, and minutes of the Mental Health Taskforce [here](#).

Student Analytics Roundtable

Also linked to the programme of the Taskforce, I am hosting a roundtable on May 9th which will enable providers to share perspectives on progress with the implementation of student analytics. Please contact ben.mccarthy@ntu.ac.uk if you or a colleague would like further details.

Data Sharing between HEPs and Students' Unions

In collaboration with NUS Charity and AdviceUK, I have published a [guide on sharing information between students' unions \(SUs\) and HEPs](#) when there are concerns for a student's wellbeing. In the guide we outline the scenarios where information sharing is appropriate, and how this is consistent with your requirements under the UK GDPR. We also provide a set of recommended actions that we encourage HEPs and SUs to consider and resolve collaboratively.

I recognise that organisations will and should seek independent legal advice on these matters. Nevertheless, my hope is this guide will facilitate discussions between SUs and HEPs to foster collaboration and cohesion on student mental health support. I would like to thank those organisations and colleagues that have supported this work.

Similar guidance, on sharing information between purpose-built student accommodation and HEPs, was published in 2023. It can be viewed [here](#).

Student Support Redesign Roundtables

During March, I held roundtables on two key aspects of student support: pastoral support – covering personal tutoring, coaching, and mentoring – and peer support. These were well-attended by colleagues from across the sector. The briefings for and notes from these sessions can be found attached to this email.

Student Needs Framework User Guide

Insights generated through these roundtables continue to inform the work I am progressing with AdvanceHE, which to date has seen the publication of the [Student Needs Framework](#). This will be accompanied shortly by a User Guide, which we envisage will enable HEPs the use the Framework to identify fundamental elements of student support that can be improved through strategic service redesign.

Moving On

You will be aware that I have been confirmed by the Government as the next Chair of the Office for Students, a role that I will commence in early July. I am looking forward to continuing to work with many of you to advance students' interests, building on my experience over the past three years as the Higher Education Student Support Champion. I will step down at the end of June 2025 and provide one further update before then on further progress and summarise what we have achieved together. I am considering sharing before I move on a short reflection on the trends that I see shaping student support over the next decade.

Thank you for your continued interest and engagement.

Professor Edward Peck