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Proactive support to maximise MPharm student wellbeing: 4 years of impact

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INTRODUCTION

A bespoke wellbeing and support programme was developed in 2015 in collaboration with student support services to address locally observed high levels of MPharm student anxiety and stress¹. A UK-wide study indicated that high levels of perceived stress were common, with 40% of undergraduate pharmacy students feeling stressed often and 11% feel stressed all the time². A range of workshops and resources were designed to address key stressors identified by the MPharm students themselves; anxiety associated with Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), pressures of professionalism and work-life balance. Subsequently the programme has evolved to include maths anxiety support. The programme is embedded within the curriculum to reinforce to students the importance of managing wellbeing as an essential professional skill.

AIMS

The aims of the MPharm wellbeing programme are to improve student wellbeing, enhance engagement and to maximise academic performance.

Ongoing evaluation of the programme aims to ensure the workshops, resources and related initiatives respond to student needs and to determine whether student understanding of wellbeing has improved as a result of participation in the programme.

METHOD

The programme has been evaluated since its introduction, and to date over 1000 students have participated. All workshop participants complete evaluation forms and key themes have been identified from student feedback utilising thematic content analysis.

Figure 1: MPharm wellbeing programme overview

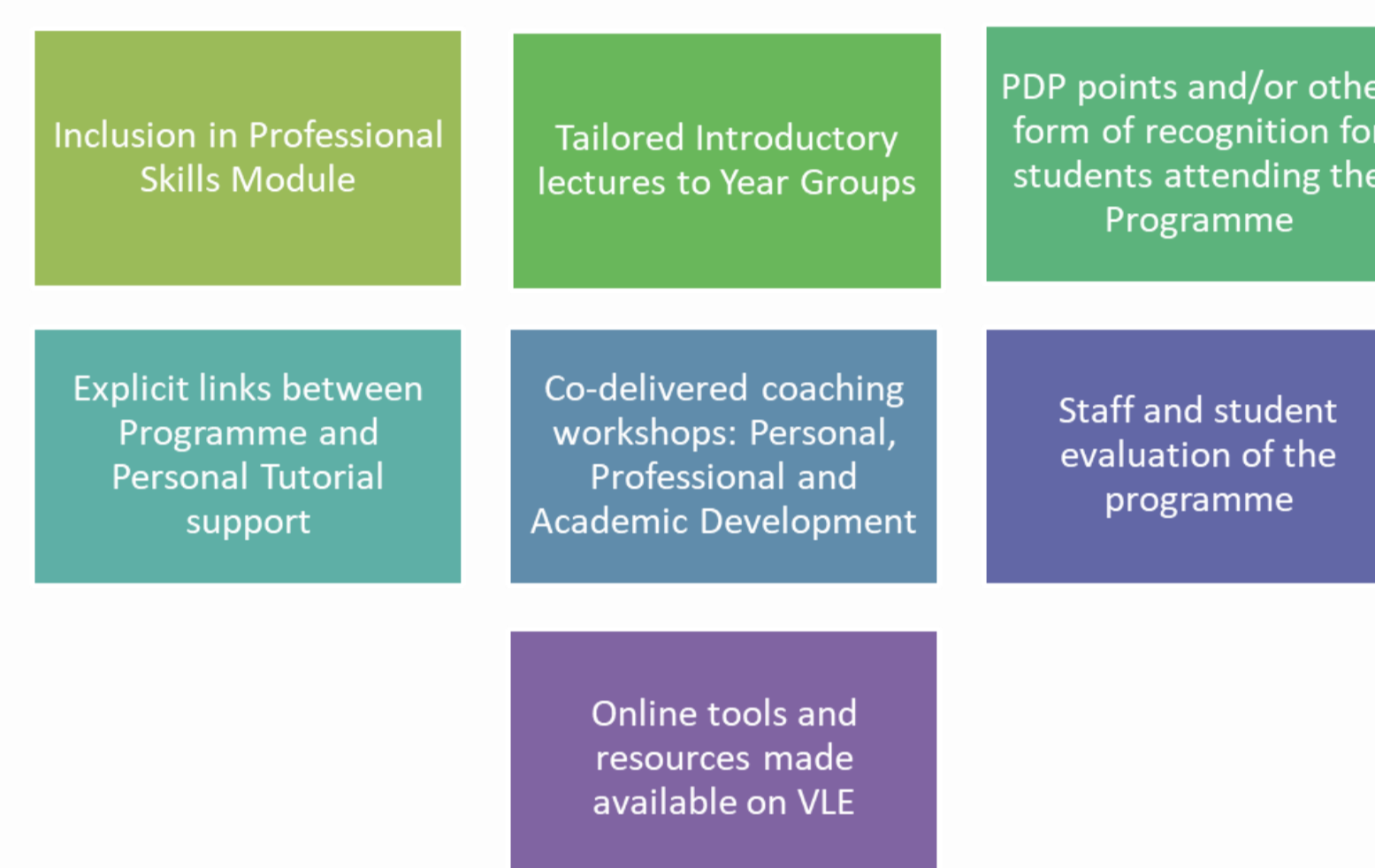


Figure 2: MPharm wellbeing workshop summary

Workshop	Key themes
Keep calm and succeed in your OSCEs	OSCEs
Coping with professionalism and finding a work-life balance	Professionalism and time management
Manage your wellbeing- maximise your performance	Wellbeing and performance

Workshop format and content

- Focus on practical activities
 - Interviews
 - OSCEs
 - Rating scales
- Peer discussion and support
- Practical strategies to take away
- Signposting to further sources of support

RESULTS

92% of students attending the workshops would recommend them to their friends; with 96% gaining a better understanding of how their wellbeing relates to performance. 96% learnt useful strategies for the future.

Over the last 5 years common themes demonstrating the personal impact of the workshops on students have been identified, including:

The importance and relevance of wellbeing:

“Important to take care of yourself as a future healthcare professional in order to deliver the best service possible to patients”

“Understanding how my mindset affects performance”

Importance of gaining perspective:

“To know that the difficult situations have been overcome before”

“A little bit of stress is good to do your best”

Identifying personal issues with wellbeing:

“I always feel guilty when I’m not studying- now I know that taking time out is actually ok- it is me being a professional”

“That it is actually OK to have some time away from studies and this can maximise performance”

CONCLUSION

The programme continues to evolve and develop and other schools within the institution are recognising the benefits of embedded, bespoke wellbeing initiatives. It is essential that student wellbeing is prioritised by all academic staff and the links between wellbeing and academic performance should be acknowledged.

REFERENCES

1. Evans M, Ward N. Building resilience and improving wellbeing in pharmacy students: a collaborative approach. *University and College Counselling Journal* 17 (1): 173 – 189
2. Tester, H (2014) Workshop your way to wellbeing. *Pharmaceutical Journal*, 293 (7837/8), pp. 568-569.