



## **Wellbeing Protocol and Student Confidentiality**

**Jan 2022 (last updated November 2024)**

At Forward College, we understand student wellbeing to be a sustainable state characterised by predominantly positive feelings, attitudes and relationships, positive functioning and a high level of satisfaction with learning and life experiences.

By positive functioning, we emphasise resilience as the ability to overcome and learn from one's challenges. As Wellbeing goals, we emphasise:

- 1.** Promote and maintain mental, emotional and physical health via fostering a supportive, collaborative, open and inclusive institutional environment
- 2.** Provide prompt and tailored support to care for the social and emotional wellbeing of individual students
- 3.** Make provisions for academic success through implementing effective adjustments to accommodate students necessitating support

At Forward, the therapeutic dimension of Wellbeing is integrated in a **holistic approach** that also includes the **BBL** (Bachelor's in Business & Leadership (360 assessment & coaching ·Personal development)), the **Mentoring and pastoral support** (Personalised tutoring, ·Learning accommodations), the **Community activities** (Living with peers, ·Campus events: Tea Talks, Nature walks), making the entire environment committed to enhance students' positive college experience. The **Therapeutic dimension** is oriented to provide preventive interventions such as workshops, training for staff and students on topics related to mental health and counselling for those students with reduced wellbeing or struggling with mental health issues during the school year.

Forward provides individual support to students experiencing reduced wellbeing, via engagement with the Wellbeing Team members. Everytime a student is identified as a 'student of concern' by the Wellbeing Team, this protocol will be applicable. Whenever a student of the college intends (or is signed by a staff member, teacher or peer student) to make an exchange with the Campus Wellbeing Team in order to discuss personal and/or mental and/or emotional

health, and/or medical circumstances, the following procedures and guidelines have to be considered.

## **Wellbeing Protocol and Student Confidentiality**

### **1. Contact with Wellbeing Team**

The Campus Wellbeing Coordinator or Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator (Lisbon based) are the first ports of call for any student wishing / needing to discuss any personal matters relating to their own wellbeing. The Campus Wellbeing Coordinator will decide if/and when a student ought to seek additional clinical support from the Student Counsellor and will inform his/her evaluation to Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator (Lisbon based). Members of staff should in no case send students directly to the Student Counsellor, whose involvement is only initiated after an initial assessment by the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator or Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator.

The contact with the Wellbeing Coordinators can be done in a variety of ways:

- a. Students who have signalled a mental health history or a particular learning difficulty during the admission process will be contacted by the Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator before the beginning of the school year to evaluate current needs for support.
- b. Students can approach the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator or the Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator directly or contact them via email in case of need. In this case, it will be scheduled a first evaluation meeting with the student to identify the specific needs. Students can also voluntarily approach the Student Counsellors during the Wellbeing Open Hours that occur regularly on each campus.
- c. Students can approach the Wellbeing Coordinators after receiving an indication and encouragement to do so from a peer or a teacher, or even other staff member that showed concern with their mental health.
- d. Tutors, Personal Tutors, TLCs, teachers or other Staff Members are invited to remain vigilant for signs of personal difficulties among the students, and in case of uncertainty on the action to take should discuss the matter with the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator. If for any reason tutors or staff have reason to think that raising the issue of personal wellbeing with one of your students may be awkward, distressing, uncomfortable, or otherwise problematic, they can contact the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator directly, who will then reach out to the student in question. The Wellbeing Team will provide basic information for all staff on mental health first aid, including information about how to become a certificate Mental

Health First Aider if desired, in order to increase the possibility that any student who may be facing mental health challenges or crisis can be appropriately identified and referred to receive the needed care.

- e. The Campus Wellbeing Coordinator may contact individual students directly whenever they have reason to think that students are encountering difficulties.

## 2. **Risk assessment and interventions**

After the first contact with the student, and the initial risk assessment (see risk and concern levels below), the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator can decide, after discussion with the extended Wellbeing Team, in case of actual need, for different types of interventions (not excludents):

- a) Non-regular short meetings with the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator to check student's condition and progress (ex. Once a month, or every 3 weeks)

- b) Indication to receive regular counselling from the student counsellors - up to 8 individual sessions during school year (depending on risk evaluation the sessions can be extended)

- c) Referral for external support when specific treatment or expertise is not available at Forward (ex. Long term therapy, Nutritionist, Psychiatrist, other medical doctor, physical therapy, neurologist, lawyer, clinical exams, etc.)

- d) Indication to the Learning Accommodations Team, of needed procedures or further evaluation to establish learning adjustments that should be implemented to overcome student's difficulties. If any learning adjustments need to be made, the Coordinator will determine the nature of these in close consultation with the student in question. Any agreement reached will be reflected in a Learning Support Agreement (LSA) drafted by the Learning Accommodations Team, and which will outline any adjustments required for the benefit and guidance of any tutors who are in regular contact with the student. Once a decision has been reached regarding any potential adjustments required for a specific student, the Learning Accommodations Team will inform any members of Staff concerned by circulating a copy of the finalised LSA. Staff members are required to respect the confidential nature of these adjustments by not divulging their nature or existence to any other students, unless the nature of adjustments in question make this impracticable or impossible.

- e) Indication to be part of the [\*\*Fitness to Study Policy\*\*](#).

- ## 3. **Role and Involvement of the Student Counsellors:** The Student Counsellor becomes involved only at the request of the Campus Wellbeing

Coordinator, with whom they closely collaborate. The role of the Student Counsellor is that of providing a professional clinical assessment of a student's mental health condition at a particular moment in time, and to suggest any measures that may be taken to address the problem or alleviate difficulties. This can range from the recommendation to seek regular treatment outside of the college to provision of short-term counselling for students at Forward College, practical advice on how to manage one's mental health, or recommendations about any possible adjustments in the student's activity within the College, including any possible deferral of study, temporary suspension/interruption, or termination of a course of study or part thereof. Please note that the role of the Student Counsellors is strictly advisory. Any recommendation put forward by the Student Counsellor will be addressed solely and exclusively to the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator, and will be restricted to matters that are strictly necessary to the handling of an individual student's relation with the college, and will not include additional personal details discussed by the student with the Student Counsellors. In addition, the Student Counsellors, along with the Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator, will also create contents on Wellbeing and Mental Health to be let available for students and staff, organise workshops on wellbeing relevant topics, participate, when appropriate, in the student's projects and be available during the Open Hours schedule to meet with students in need.

4. **Decision-making process:** if the personal circumstances of a particular student require any adjustment in their involvement with the College - including any possible deferral of study, inclusion in the Fitness to Study Protocol, temporary suspension / interruption, or termination of a course of study or part thereof - this decision will be taken by the student with the agreement of the Teaching and Learning Coordinator of each Campus, in close consultation with the Campus Manager and the Forward Senior Team. Any decision regarding potential special arrangements and/or interruption, suspension, or termination of study will be communicated, to concerned fellows only, by the Teaching and Learning Coordinator or by the Campus Manager. Fellows are required to respect the confidentiality of the information circulated, and are asked to refrain from addressing any of the reasons behind such a decision with the student in question, unless explicitly asked to do so by the student themselves or by the Teaching and Learning Coordinator.

5. **Confidentiality and Information Communications**

Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of student records and information is crucial for maintaining trust, complying with legal requirements, and ensuring the well-being of our students. This guideline applies to all faculty, staff, administrators, and contractors who have access to student records and information at Forward College. It covers all formats

of student records, including electronic, paper, and verbal communication. Access to student records should be granted only on a "need-to-know" basis, and individuals should only access information necessary for performing their job duties.

Related to Wellbeing interventions, this guideline aims to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of student information and interactions with counselling services at Forward College. We are committed to creating a safe and trusting environment where students can seek support without fear of their personal information being disclosed without their consent. This policy applies to all counsellors, staff, and extended Wellbeing team members working within the Wellbeing scope of Forward College. It covers all aspects of student interactions with counselling services, including in-person sessions, electronic records, and communication.

Prior to the commencement of counselling, students must receive and understand information about the limits of confidentiality, exceptions, and the purpose of record-keeping. Students must provide informed consent for the sharing of information outside the counselling setting, except as required by law or in cases of immediate safety concerns. Information regarding a student's counselling sessions should not be disclosed to third parties, including family members or other college members, without the student's explicit consent.

Access to student counselling records or information should be restricted to authorised personnel on a "need-to-know" basis, such as counsellors directly involved in the student's care, the Teaching and Learning Coordinator or the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator. Electronic records should be securely protected with access controls and encryption to prevent unauthorised access. Counselling records should be retained for a period specified by institutional policy and applicable laws. After this period, records should be securely and permanently destroyed.

- In situations where a student poses an immediate threat to themselves or others, the Student Counsellors or the Wellbeing Coordinators have a legal and ethical obligation to disclose information to appropriate authorities without student consent.
- Student Counsellors should adhere to the ethical standards and guidelines set forth by relevant professional organisations, such as the Psychology Board, in addition to institutional policies.

All information shared between the Student Counsellors and the Campus Wellbeing Coordinator or Forward College Wellbeing Coordinator is also strictly confidential, and shall not be divulged to any members of staff unless absolutely necessary (ex. in life-threatening situations) and shall in no case be divulged to any other students of the College, unless explicitly requested to do so by the student in question. In order to uphold trust in the counselling relationship, students can expect that any information

shared about themselves and others with the Student Counsellors or Wellbeing Coordinators will remain confidential, except in circumstances related to reasons of safeguarding, requirements of the law, and/ or public protection.

Students have the right to determine the nature, extent, timing, and content of any communication on a decision that concerns them directly. This includes the right to withhold any details regarding the nature of the difficulties they experience or have experienced from any Fellows, member of Staff, or fellow student. This includes the right not to divulge the fact that any special arrangements have been made on the basis of personal difficulties, medical issues, or any form of distress. In such cases, no reason shall be given for such changes, and the Teaching and Learning Coordinator will proceed to inform any members of staff that are directly concerned by such changes, specifying only that the decision in question was made for 'personal and confidential reasons'.

#### Risk Evaluation/ Levels of concern:

This is the initial risk assessment indicator. For each case, more in-depth information is available for the Wellbeing Team.

<p><b>Level 1/ Green flag: Minimum risk</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No current deliberate self harm (DSH), nor suicidal ideation (SI) nor homicidal ideation (HI)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No history of DSH, nor SI nor HI</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of DSH, but no current DSH and no current urge to self harm. Consider intensity, frequency and type of past DSH (cutting, burning, picking skin; how deep, did it need medical attention, etc.) when choosing between green or yellow flag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of passive SI, but no current SI. Consider intensity, frequency and type of suicidal ideation (active/ passive, with plan/ no plan, what types of plans etc.) when choosing between green or yellow flag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of active SI, but no current SI, then consider yellow flag as suicidal ideation was active.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of suicide attempt, but no current SI, then consider yellow flag, especially if suicide attempt was with intent.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preserved capacity to keep daily routine (going to classes, attend meetings, have a social network);</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Worries and difficulties described are not too intense that block normal activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emotional distress can be related to circumstantial and expected barriers (homesickness, occasional bad academic results, physical disease) and not last longing</li> </ul>
---	--

<p>Level 2/ Yellow Flag: mild/moderate risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of SI, but no current SI. Consider intensity, frequency and type of suicidal ideation (active/ passive, with plan/ no plan, what types of plans etc.) when choosing between yellow and green flag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of DSH. Consider intensity, frequency and type of past DSH (cutting, burning, picking skin; how deep, did it need medical attention, etc.) when choosing between green or yellow flag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of passive HI.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Current SI. Consider as yellow flag ONLY if passive, no plans or intent, it is not frequent, there is no history of active SI or suicidal actions, there is overall good functioning, there is no significant family history of mental health disorders, student has no access to means of completing suicide and student feels they are able to keep themselves safe; otherwise consider student as red flag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Current DSH. Consider as yellow flag ONLY if not frequent, not medically concerning, there is no history of active SI, there is overall good functioning, and there is no significant family history of mental health disorders; otherwise consider student as yellow flag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Significant changes in functioning: e.g. student is withdrawing from others, is not attending classes/ activities, there is disturbance in sleep patterns and appetite, poor hygiene.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report of disordered eating (restrictive eating, bingeing and purging etc.) where weight is reported to be stable, and/or students' report of their weight is within average BMI/ range, and/or a visual assessment indicates body weight is within average BMI/ range.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of a significant mental health disorder which has been treated and is not currently active (e.g. eating disorder, psychosis, anxiety disorder with agoraphobia etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The capacity to keep daily routine (going to classes, attend meetings, have a social network) is decreased;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Worries and difficulties described are somehow intense and are blocking normal activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emotional distress can not be related to circumstantial and expected barriers (homesickness, occasional bad academic results, physical disease), or even if they can, are more persistent in time</li> </ul>
<p>Level 3/Red Flag: High risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Current SI. (Consider as red flag and not SOS flag ONLY if there are no plans or intent, student feels they can keep themselves safe and have no access to means of completing suicide. Create a safety plan and advise student of emergency services. Consider contacting next of kin)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Current DSH if the DSH is frequent, actions are medically</li> </ul>



	<p>concerning, urges are intense etc.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Past or present HI.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Past actions to hurt others but no current HI.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Report of disordered eating (restrictive eating, bingeing and purging etc.) where student's report of their weight is lower than recommended BMI / range (lower range threshold of 18.5), and/ or a visual assessment indicates that body weight may be in lower than recommended BMI, and/or there is report of physical symptoms (dizziness, fainting, fatigue etc.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No report of disordered eating but there is low weight where a visual assessment indicates that body weight may be lower than recommended BMI (lower range threshold of 18.5).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Level of anxiety or depression is blocking the capacity to deal with daily routine (difficult coming to classes or attending to meetings, not completing exams, emotional intensity)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Episodes of panic attacks or crying are frequent</p>
S.O.S flag: Emergency situation	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Current active SI.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Current active HI.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Psychotic state e.g. hearing and/or responding to voices, disorganised/ pressured speech, etc.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Severe panic/anxiety attack</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Severe depressive/apathetic state</p> <p>Attention: If you feel that your student is in immediate danger, then the first thing to do before anything else is to call the Emergency number, the police or ambulance services, then the Wellbeing coordinator</p>