

Appendix D

Student Support Website Focus Group Findings

Six focus groups were held between 08/03/2021 – 18/03/2021. 28 students attended in total. The first 30 minutes of each focus group involved a discussion on the student support website, and the last 15 minutes involved a discussion on the student stepped care designs.

1. What sort of things would you go to the student support website for?

- For anything you are unsure about related to University.
- Information about how to access support from services like the Counselling Service and DASS.
- Advice around academic, financial, mental health and wellbeing issues.
- What to do in an emergency situation.
- To signpost students to services (added by ResLife adviser).
- Mitigating circumstances.
- Student services: student card, paying fees, bursaries.
- IT solutions.
- Help with accommodation.
- Advice for living at home, living in accommodation etc.
- Reporting issues seen on campus e.g. hate crime.
- Revision tips.

Key takeaways: students expect a wide range of topics to be covered on the website

2. What would you expect to find when accessing the student support website?

- Up-to-date news.
- Information for EU students around immigration and Brexit.
- Information about self-isolation and covid.
- A Link to MyManchester.
- A tour of campus/ campus map.
- Information on language anxiety (a common issue amongst International students).
- Information about on campus bicycle support (heard about it but could not find it on the website).
- Link to the SU buddy scheme.
- A live chat option to discuss finances.
- Cultural guides with information on things like bus passes.

Key takeaways: students may go to the student support website expecting to find up to date information

3. What should be on the homepage?

- An introduction/overview about what to expect from the page.
- Regular news and updates on any changes.
- How to get hold of someone if you aren't sure where to go to.
- Easier to find information on support services/A-Z.
- Mind map of how to access support that takes you where you need to be.
- A navigation bar with drop-down menu.
- Resources for urgent help (It is important that this information is not too 'wordy').
- Information about mitigating circumstances as exam season approaches.
- Information about SU pledges.

Feedback on current homepage

- Too simple.
- Getting in touch should be at the top.
- Language needs to be more concise.
- Page is busy. Lots of scrolling and lots of boxes. It is confusing why some things have been grouped as they are.
- The image appears to be a stock image (adding a UoM picture would be more personal).
- It is not obvious that spotlights are changed regularly (confusion about why Be Active is included).
- Connect with us gives misleading message (they link to official UoM accounts rather than student support/wellbeing accounts).
- Text used on the purple boxes could cause sensory overload. Logos or images could be used on these buttons to minimise word count.

Key takeaways: students like to see that you have the option to talk to a person. More information about how to navigate the page and what to expect may be needed.

4. What do you like about the website?

- Easy to navigate, sections are well split out.
- It is easy to go back a page due to the navigation line at the top of the page.
- Good structure and well organised.
- Don't have to scroll too far down on any of the pages.
- Clean and clear, it is good not having too many pictures.
- Links to social media and news.
- Crisis and emergency/ mental health helpline being at the top of the homepage.
- Calendar is good, especially the six ways categorising.
- The amount of useful information that considers all aspects of support, with enough detail (although not how it is presented).

- Specific communities section. Other groups that could be included: Student sex workers (including resources from Ugly Mugs), Part-time students, International students (including language support).
- The videos make it more human.
- SWTW (although should be more acknowledgement that SWTW actually works to get you out of a bad situation).

Key takeaways: important to have help in a crisis information, navigation may have good points.

5. What don't you like about the website?

- Bland.
- Lack of audio and visuals.
- Too much text.
- Too many boxes.
- Not colour coordinated.
- Feels cold and not personable.
- Too many links to get where you need to be. Hard to find your way back to where you started.
- Takes a lot of time to find the right information.
- A lot of useful information is buried very deep into the website
- I found it difficult to access information on Direct Debits, as there was a large amount of clicking to get to it.
- Too much information and too many phone numbers to contact (feels overwhelming).
- Search bar results looks like google search results.
- I get a feeling of my problem being passed back to me.
- Looks too similar to MyManchester and other University websites. This is more important so needs to stand out.
- Missing a COVID section that includes specific information about building access, opening times and what numbers you can call.
- Too much information on the 24-hour helpline page.
- Help in crisis page includes information that isn't crisis information (there could be a separate tab for Reslife and self-isolating students).
- The academic support section is not specific for everybody.
- Issue of 'wellbeing' being used synonymously with 'mental health'.
- Wellbeing and academic support should not be separated as both influence one another.
- No recognition of international students, they have particular worries that need to be addressed.

Improvement suggestions

- Latest news and events should be at the top of the homepage.
- Spotlights/latest news as a banner slideshow to use up the space better.
- Too much text on pages, needs to be more to the point. Specific pages can have more text.
- Add a widget for the events calendar.
- Advertise Wellbeing Wednesdays.
Would be good to see the faces behind the services to provide a human touch.

- Cognitively less taxing resources or topics can be more buried, for example banking. Important information around accessing support less buried and easier to find.
- Information about mitigating circumstances should address student's hesitations to apply.
- It is important for the website to cater to a range of 'strengths', e.g. 'what do you have the strength to do today?' - read, listen, talk to a person.
- Videos from real students.
Links to employment information in the finance section.

Key takeaways: visuals need improvements, needs to have more of a personable feel, text needs cut down.

6. How would you like to browse/navigate the site?

- A list of what is on there, rather than having to click on every page to get where you need to be.
- Tool bar down the side (clicked back and ended up on MyManchester).
- Drop down menu of everything available.
- Quick find section for when students are stressed.
- A questionnaire/mind map that directs you to what you need.
- Categorising content with your learning needs e.g. pdfs, videos.
- A clear area with contact details of services. A different area can then have the more recreational information.

Key takeaways: drop downs and tool bars could be utilised, resources could be categorised depending on the users preference.

7. Some respondents to our survey said they found the amount of information on the website overwhelming. Do you agree with this?

- All participants tended to agree.
- It is good to have information there, too much is better than too little.
- Everything is there that you need, it is the navigation of the information that is the issue.
- Overwhelming amount of information. When looking for wellbeing and counselling support, all I could find was self-help. By the time I actually found out how to make an appointment, I felt that it would be too difficult to make judging by how long it took me to find that information.

Key takeaways: difficult to find what you need due to the amount of information/difficulties with navigation.

8. How easy is it to find the right support service for an issue by using the information on the website?

- Hard to find the right service for your issue.

- Hard to find out how to actually speak to a person.
- For mental health it is easy, but once you find the right service it can be hard to access it e.g. Counselling Service.
- It would be useful to see a description of what kind of support is for what issue.
- I learnt about the support after I started accessing support. For example I was referred to link workers and CBT. Why isn't this information on the website?

Key takeaways: students like the option to speak to a 'person'.

9. What kind of design changes do you think would improve the website?

- Sight impaired people need consideration through high contrast and large text options.
- Needs to be more visual.
- Use SWTW colours more.
- Live tiles to be able to read more about what is behind a particular section.

Key takeaways: take into account visually impaired people, use a wider range of colours.

10. What do you think of the tone/language used on the website?

- Most participants agreed the tone/language was good and personal.

Other comments:

- We get wellbeing advice everywhere (social media, emails etc). I am coming to website for actual support from the institution that I am paying for, not to read a news article or access a wellbeing PDF resource. There is too much stuff on the website, we actually just want support.
- It can be hard to find the motivation to seek help. When there are more layers to the website, you might be less likely to go through with seeking help.
- There is a mismatch between school wellbeing and central student support.
- I am in my 4th year and I didn't really know about the student support website. I assumed MyManchester was the place to go for help. I think students view the website as being something to read rather than a resource for help. A monthly email reminding students about the website would be useful.
- I captured support services information from a slide from my school induction session. I use this rather than go to the website.
- A lot of students don't know about the website. Monthly emails to all students would be useful.
- Wellbeing Wednesday information is copied and pasted by my school. It looks like they don't care and is hap-hazard. Coming directly from wellbeing would make it more professional.
- Too many resources are sent at once.
- I receive wellbeing messages as an International student but I do not receive any from school. Messaging could reach students multiple times or not at all. Needs to be the same for all students.

- One participant mentioned the website did not work on their mobile device (perhaps because they are overseas?).
- Students expect that the 24-hour mental health helpline is an internal service. This could be confusing for students looking for specific University help.
- There is scepticism amongst students that the University can't offer you support. In fact it is common knowledge amongst many students that there is no support available from University. It feels as though you are being passed around. There is no streamlined approach and everywhere signposts to different place. MyManchester doesn't link to the website.
- Counselling and support needs to be available in a direct manner. Everything seems to be self-care or pdf sheets. Community support is important, services need to be open. I need to speak to someone. If you've decided you need someone else's help, self-care should be an addition.

Discussion on the stepped care designs

Kings model – level of need text version

- A lot of text for a student in an anxious state.
- Information about where to go could be included on the left, 'first level' doesn't actually tell you what support it is that you need.
- Needs to have clickable links to get to the right support.
- 'Proportion of people statement' - Those in the red stage already feel isolated they may feel even more insecure and anxious knowing that they are in minority. Could be patronising/ invoke feelings of imposter syndrome. Could mean that students are more likely to underestimate an issue to avoid being in the minority.
- Choice of colours – message of green you're fine, red you're not. Feeds into anxiety.
- Pyramid structure make it feel like a competition of who is worse than who, are my circumstances worse than yours.
- The conversational tone is good.
- Describing real life feelings makes it more relatable.
- Could be made so more information is given when hovering over the model, rather than seeing all the information that is available to everyone
- Text in boxes would be more appealing.

Kings model – support available text version

- Still issues with colour and proportion.
- Could change 'proportion' to 'stages' and use different symbolism to triangle.
- Cut down number of words, e.g. level one, instead of 'our first level of support is...'.
 - Needs information about where to go for help.
 - Doesn't make too much sense as support categories sound similar.
 - The yellow and light orange sections don't actually say what services to use.
 - It demonstrates how the University support works - you have to go through all the PDFs before getting proper support. We are paying a lot.
 - Makes you think that you need to access all of the other support before you get to the top.

- There could be students that don't know what level of support they need, so a combination of the models could be better.

Stepped model

- Not as exclusionary but not as accessible due to colours and readability. White text on coloured background is difficult to read.
- Black text would be better
- Concept better as pyramid but not as aesthetically pleasing.
- Could be the perceived message that you need to graduate from step 1 to step 2. Steps mean progression.
- Having a / between anxiety/unhappiness seems like the issues are combined – could use 'or' instead.
- Better as it overlaps, easier transition between stages. No one is better than anyone else.
- Better use of space and easier to look at

Reverse pyramid

- Still issues around pyramid shape
- Doesn't use space as well, lot of the page is a shape

Columns

- Preferred to step but would prefer if they were the same height
- Use of space is poor
- Might lead to people overestimating their issue if they are drawn to step 5
- Red colour could be fear mongering (check NHS model for alternative examples)
- Gradients of colour could be used to make this more subtle

Text boxes

- Confusing to navigate
- Reminds me of website
- Consensus that this model is the least favourite
- Don't like boxes, not symmetrical, not aesthetically pleasing
- Text box pathway design is better but could be in straight line and the colours are distracting in that format

Key takeaways: generally most students preferred the step or Column design. However there are still issues with the readability and colours used. An interactive model would be best that links to the right support.

