

POLICY REGARDING STUDENT PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

ADOPTED 484-CA-5383 (04-06-2024)

Note: To minimize the impact of biases and prejudices which may be found in documents published by the Université, and recognize the diversity of the University Community, this policy uses gender neutral language.

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PREAMBLE

This institutional Policy is a demonstration of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) commitment to providing spaces for study and recreation that are healthy, safe, and supportive, and conducive to flourishing psychological health. It acknowledges that members of the University Community must work together to address student psychological health. This goal requires that all members of the University Community commit to and get involved in the process, taking both personal and collective responsibility for it. The UQAT *Politique sur la santé psychologique étudiante [Policy Regarding Student Psychological Health]* stems from a requirement of the Plan d'action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur 2021-26 [Action Plan on Student Mental Health in Higher Education 2021-26] (PASME).

UQAT acknowledges that psychological health is vital to academic perseverance and success. The Student Community has the right to grow within a learning environment that allows them to foster positive psychological health. This policy affirms the commitment UQAT makes to helping create an environment that supports the Student Community's psychological health through its implementation of a structural framework.

SECTION 1 — DEFINITIONS

Committee: University Committee for Student Psychological Health

Teaching Community: Includes any individuals who are sessional lecturers, as well as all tenure-track, adjunct, visiting, or research professors under the terms of the collective agreement governing professors at UQAT.

Student Community: Includes all individuals who are enrolled in a university-level program of study at UQAT.

University Community: In the broader sense, this includes staff members, faculty members; sessional lecturers; groups, teams, units, centres, and Research Chairs; Module Council and undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate Program Committee members; the student community (whether active or inactive). Also considered members of the university community: staff and members of the Academic Council and the Board of Directors; the members of all communities created by any of the Université's administrative or academic bodies; external agencies and natural persons who use UQAT's software infrastructure: in particular, the Association générale étudiante de l'UQAT (AGEUQAT), UQAT alumni, the Université's unions, the Fondation de l'UQAT, retired UQAT employees, members of the Association des retraités de l'UQAT (ARUQAT), the Société de l'eau souterraine de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (SESAT) and the Société Immobilière de l'Université du Québec (SIUQ).

Board of Directors: UQAT Board of Directors.

Staff member: Any individual employed by UQAT who receives a salary or wages, whether they are employed on a permanent, temporary, or casual basis.

PASME: Action Plan on Student Mental Health in Higher Education 2021-2026.

Special needs population: Individuals likely to be unable to carry out certain tasks due to a temporary or permanent condition, for example, a disability, a motor, organic, or neurological deficit, a learning disorder, or a mental health disorder. Such a condition, whether permanent or temporary, must be supported by a diagnosis (made by a physician or specialist).

Psychological health or mental health: “Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.”¹ While the ministère de l’Enseignement supérieur uses the term “mental health,” the committee instead chose “psychological health”² in order to create a positive connotation.

Positive psychological health: Positive mental health focusses on aspects of a person’s mental health that are positive, on their potential for growth, their strengths and abilities, happiness, and qualities such as responsibility, courage, creativity and perseverance, as well as material and social resources that foster and support these qualities. A person with high positive mental health is said to have flourishing mental health; a person with low mental health is said to have languishing mental health³.

Université or UQAT : The Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

SECTION 2 — PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This Policy is intended to reflect the main lines of action helping to foster the development of flourishing psychological health among the Student Community in UQAT centres, campuses, and points of service, as well as in distance education. Consequently, in support of the Student Community’s psychological health, UQAT intends to:

- Offer the Student Community spaces that support perseverance and academic success through the implementation of measures that foster psychological health, and which are respectful of the diversity of the Student Community’s needs;
- Establish conditions that foster accountability, with respect to psychological health, for all members of the University Community;
- Participate in the improvement of the Student Community’s psychological health.

SECTION 3 — SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This Policy applies to the Student Community in any of the spaces where it may gather. It is the responsibility of each individual member of the University Community, working collectively, to implement the Policy. Additionally, all centres, campuses, and points of service are covered by the Policy, as is the online, virtual space used in the delivery of distance education.

SECTION 4 — LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

This Policy falls within a context governed mainly by the following legal framework:

- the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* (RLRQ, chapter C-12)
- the *Plan d’action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026* [Action Plan on Student Mental Health in Higher Education 2021-26], Government of Québec, ministère de l’Enseignement supérieur;
- the UQAT *Politique-cadre sur la santé globale*;

¹ World Health Organization, *Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response* [Online], 2018.

<https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response> (Viewed on May 2, 2022).

² Félix Guay-Dufour (2022). *Évaluation d’implantation d’une démarche collaborative de promotion de la santé psychologique de la communauté étudiante dans les établissements d’enseignement supérieur en Estrie*.

https://savoirs.usherbrooke.ca/bitstream/handle/11143/19076/guay-dufour_felix_DPs_2022.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y

³ Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Le concept de santé mentale positive, un aperçu* [Online], 2020.

<https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/produit/publication/concept-de-sante-mentale-positive-apercu> (Viewed on May 2, 2022).

- the UQAT *Politique sur la civilité*;
- the UQAT *Politique visant à prévenir et traiter les violences à caractère sexuel incluant le code de conduite*;
- the UQAT *Politique visant à prévenir et traiter le harcèlement psychologique*;
- the UQAT *Politique sur la conciliation famille-études*;
- Any other applicable policies, directives, procedures, and any other applicable UQAT regulations.

SECTION 5 — RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As psychological health is influenced by various factors, all members of the University Community commit, individually and collectively, to helping implement spaces that support the development of flourishing psychological health in the Student Community.

UQAT looks at psychological health using an ecosystem approach. Accordingly, the broader University Community shares responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that is conducive to flourishing psychological health. As such, the leadership team, managers, various categories of staff, student association and union representatives are considered central to any activities, and to any promotional and prevention services used to foster psychological health. These individuals also play a vital role with regard to implementing or supporting a variety of accepted organizational practices that have a positive impact on well-being.

Their roles and responsibilities are assigned as follows:

5.1 University Committee for Student Psychological Health

The UQAT Comité sur la santé globale will oversee the duties of this Committee, namely:

- Promoting this Policy and making sure that it is accessible to the broader Student Community, which includes publication of the policy on the UQAT website;
- Ensuring that this Policy is consistent with and complementary to different UQAT policies including the *Politique-cadre sur la santé globale*, the *Politique de civilité*, the *Politique visant à prévenir et traiter les violences à caractère sexuel incluant le code de conduite*, the *Politique visant à prévenir et traiter le harcèlement psychologique*, and the *Politique sur la conciliation famille-études*. In effect, these other framework policies also have influence on both protection factors and risk factors associated with psychological health;
- Highlighting and promoting existing and emerging initiatives that support a flourishing psychological health in the Student Community;
- Seeing to the completion of all components listed in Section 5.1 of the *Politique-cadre sur la santé globale*.

5.2 Vice-rectorat à l'enseignement et à la réussite [Office of the Vice-Rector, Teaching and Academic Success]

- Ensures that this policy is implemented, enforced, and complied with;
- Makes sure that the special needs population has its needs taken into account;
- Supports the use of inclusive and recognized teaching methods that foster positive psychological health.

5.3 Vice-rectorat aux ressources [Office of the Vice-Rector, Resources]

- Sets up welcoming, healthy, safe, supportive, and inclusive.

5.4 Human Resources

- Supports this Policy by inviting staff members to train for and participate in initiatives that pertain to student psychological health.

5.5 Academic Management Office

- Supports this Policy by inviting the instructor community to train for and participate in initiatives that pertain to student psychological health.

5.6 Services to the Student Community

- Administers the human, financial, and material resources needed to establish PASME, in partnership with the relevant services;
- Makes sure that support, counselling, and outreach services, as well as promotion and prevention services in psychological health are put in place, and that information about these services is accessible;
- Puts different resources in place so that the special needs population has its needs taken into account;
- Promotes adapted measures when required for the purpose of supporting the wellbeing of special needs populations;
- Supports initiatives that foster commitment and participation of the Student Community at UQAT or in the broader community.

5.7 Teaching and Research Unit and Institute heads, senior staff, coordinators, service managers, campus and centre directors

In addition to their personal responsibility as members of the University Community, these individuals:

- Promote support, counselling, and outreach services, as well as promotion and prevention services in psychological health, and direct the Student Community towards appropriate resources as needed;
- Promote adapted measures when required for the purpose of supporting the wellbeing of special needs populations;
- Support psychological health initiatives that foster the commitment and participation of the Student Community in their TRU, school, or institute.

5.8 Members of the Teaching Community

In addition to their personal responsibility as members of the University Community, these individuals:

- Participate through use of inclusive teaching methods accepted as fostering positive psychological health;
- Promote support, counselling, and outreach services, as well as promotion and prevention services in psychological health, and direct the Student Community towards appropriate resources as needed;
- Promote adapted measures when required for the purpose of supporting the wellbeing of special needs populations.

5.9 Student Association Representatives

In addition to their personal responsibility as members of the University Community, these individuals:

- Promote support, counselling, and outreach services, as well as promotion and prevention services in psychological health, and direct the Student Community towards appropriate resources as needed;
- Make sure that the diversity of student voices is represented, including those of the special needs population;
- Propose and involve themselves in the establishment of initiatives that foster commitment and participation of the Student Community at UQAT or in the broader community.
- Ensure that the various terms in this policy are complied with;
- Appoint representatives from the Student Community to the University Committee for Student Psychological Health.

5.10 Members of the University Community

- Read this document, and become familiar with the roles and responsibilities that pertain to the Policy;
- Contribute to creating and maintaining a positive academic environment (inclusive, safe, supportive);
- Provide a positive model, by adopting behaviours that promote positive psychological health;
- Inform themselves, take training, participate in proposed initiatives about psychological health, and seek services as needed.

SECTION 6 — FINAL PROVISIONS

This policy enters into force on the day of its adoption by the Board of Directors.

UQAT will ensure that the Policy is distributed and made accessible to the broader University Community.

This document will be subject to review every three (3) years or upon entry into force of any amendments that come to bear on this Policy.

The vice-rectorat à l'enseignement et à la réussite [Office of the Vice-Rector, Teaching and Academic Success] will see to the implementation of the provisions specified in this Policy, and any directives and procedures stemming from such provisions.