

MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELLING POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The College recognizes that the mental health and emotional well-being of its students is fundamental to their overall development and academic success. In alignment with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, the **Ministry of Education's Mano Darpan Initiative**, and the **UMMEED Guidelines for Prevention of Suicide in Schools and Colleges**, this institution commits to establishing comprehensive mental health support services.

This policy is designed to:

- Promote a positive and supportive college environment
- Provide accessible mental health counselling services
- Support student well-being and resilience
- Prevent and respond to mental health crises
- Foster a culture where seeking help is normalized and encourage

2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

The primary objectives of this Mental Health and Counselling Policy are:

2.1 Primary Goals

- To establish and maintain a comprehensive student mental health support system
- To ensure timely identification and appropriate intervention for students experiencing mental health concerns
- To provide confidential, professional counselling services to all students
- To create a safe and supportive college environment that promotes mental well-being
- To prevent self-harm, suicide, and other mental health crises through early intervention
- To build capacity among faculty, staff, and students in mental health awareness and support

2.2 Institutional Commitment

College commits to:

- Allocating adequate resources for mental health services
- Ensuring non-discriminatory access to counselling support
- Maintaining confidentiality and ethical standards
- Regular evaluation and improvement of mental health services
- Integration of mental well-being across all college activities

3. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

3.1 Coverage

This policy applies to:

- All enrolled students (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- College faculty and staff (to the extent applicable)
- College management and administration
- Visiting faculty and guest facilitators

3.2 Implementation

This policy shall be implemented across:

- Campus grounds and facilities
- Academic and non-academic activities
- All college-sponsored events and programs

4. COUNSELLOR POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Position Overview

The College Counsellor is a dedicated professional responsible for providing mental health support, counselling services, and coordinating the College Wellness Programs. This is a specialized position requiring professional qualifications in psychology, counselling, or related fields.

4.2 Reporting Structure

The College Counsellor shall report directly to the **Principal** and work in coordination with the **Teachers**. If required, the counsellor will report to **Authorities of the Institution**.

4.3 Position Status

- 1 day a week
- On-campus or easily accessible location
- Attendance: As per college working hours, with flexibility for crisis situations
- Availability: During academic calendar, with provisions for continuity during emergencies

5. QUALIFICATIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

5.1 Educational Qualifications (Essential)

Candidates must possess:

Master's Degree in one of the following fields:

- Clinical Psychology (M.Phil or M.Sc with RCI registration)
- Counselling Psychology
- Clinical Counselling
- Psychosocial Support
- Social Work (specialization in mental health/clinical)
- Psychiatric Social Work
- Educational Psychology[3]

License/Registration:

- Registration with Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) - mandatory for clinical psychologists
- Membership with Indian Psychological Association (IPA) or Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP) - highly desirable
- Valid practicing license from relevant professional body

Experience:

- Minimum 2 years of experience in college/university counselling or student mental health services
- OR minimum 3 years of experience in clinical counselling or mental health settings
- Experience with diverse student populations preferred

5.2 Desirable Qualifications

- Ph.D. or specialized certification in crisis intervention and suicide prevention
- Training in trauma-informed care
- Experience with college student mental health issues
- Multilingual abilities (especially Marathi and Hindi)
- Knowledge of cultural sensitivity in counselling

5.3 Personal Attributes

Preference shall be given to candidates who demonstrate:

- Strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Empathy, patience, and cultural sensitivity
- Trustworthiness and professional integrity
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Good relationship-building skills
- Commitment to ongoing professional development
- Crisis management and de-escalation abilities
- Non-judgmental attitude towards diverse student concerns

5.4 Selection Process

The selection shall include:

1. Screening of credentials and qualifications
2. Personal interview with Principal and Institute Heads
3. Presentation/demonstration of counselling approach
4. Reference checks from previous employers
5. Medical fitness certificate

6. DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

6.1 Primary Counselling Services

The College Counsellor shall:

Individual Counselling

- Conduct confidential one-on-one counselling sessions with students
- Address academic stress, career concerns, personal relationships, family issues
- Provide crisis counselling and emergency mental health support
- Duration: Sessions typically 45-60 minutes
- Frequency: As determined by student need and counsellor assessment

Problem Assessment and Intervention

- Conduct comprehensive mental health assessments
- Develop individualized intervention and support plans
- Monitor student progress and adjust support strategies
- Provide psycho-educational guidance
- Build coping and resilience skills

Crisis Intervention

- Respond immediately to students in acute distress
- Assess risk of self-harm or suicide
- Provide immediate support and stabilization
- Arrange emergency referrals when needed
- Maintain safety protocols and documentation

6.2 Preventive and Wellness Activities

Awareness and Education Programs

- Conduct awareness sessions on mental health, stress management, and emotional well-being
- Facilitate workshops on topics such as:
 - Exam anxiety and academic stress management
 - Healthy relationships and communication
 - Substance abuse prevention
 - Suicide prevention and self-harm awareness
 - Resilience and positive psychology

- Career counselling and life planning
- Frequency: Minimum 2-4 sessions per semester

Environmental Assessment

- Assess college environment for mental health risks
- Identify potential high-stress periods (examinations, transitions, etc.)
- Recommend environmental and procedural changes to support well-being

6.3 Collaboration and Coordination

Faculty and Staff Engagement

- Provide mental health education and training to faculty and staff
- Support teachers in identifying and referring at-risk students
- Collaborate on early warning sign identification
- Provide consultation to faculty regarding student concerns

Parent/Guardian Involvement

- Communicate with parents/guardians regarding student mental health (with student consent, except in emergencies)
- Provide guidance to parents on supporting student well-being
- Schedule meetings with parents when appropriate and necessary
- Share resources and referral information

6.4 Administrative Responsibilities

Record Keeping and Documentation

- Maintain secure, confidential student counselling records
- Document sessions, assessments, interventions, and outcomes
- Maintain case files with appropriate security measures
- Prepare annual reports on counselling services and usage
- Track referrals and follow-up outcomes

Scheduling and Accessibility

- Maintain regular office hours accessible to students
- Provide appointment scheduling system
- Ensure emergency accessibility during college hours
- Post counselling room location, hours, and contact information

- Display crisis helpline numbers prominently

Professional Development

- Attend training programs on latest counselling practices and mental health research
- Participate in continuing education and certification programs
- Maintain professional memberships and registrations
- Stay updated on college-specific mental health concerns and trends

7. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

7.1 Counselling Services Overview

The College provides a comprehensive mental health support framework based on the continuum of care:

Level	Focus	Services
Primary Prevention	Promote mental health and well-being for all students	Awareness programs, stress management workshops, peer support networks, positive college environment
Secondary Prevention	Early identification and intervention for at-risk students	Screening, counselling, support groups, monitoring
Tertiary Prevention	Crisis management and specialized intervention	Crisis counselling, psychiatric referrals, emergency response, follow-up care

7.2 Student-Counsellor Accessibility

Accessibility Standards:

- Emergency access during college hours
- Option for online/video counselling for accessibility
- Walk-in consultation availability (in addition to scheduled appointments)
- Contact information displayed in multiple locations (notice boards, college website, student handbook)

7.3 Services and Support Mechanisms

Available Services:

- Individual counselling and psychotherapy
- Crisis intervention and emergency support
- Academic and career counselling
- Substance abuse prevention and support
- Relationship and interpersonal counselling
- Stress management and coping skills training
- Group counselling and support groups
- Referral to external professionals
- Mental health awareness and education programs
- Consultation to faculty and staff

Communication Channels:

- In-person appointments
- Telephone counselling
- Email for non-emergency inquiries
- Online/video counselling (when available)
- Walk-in availability for urgent concerns
- College website and information portal

8. GUIDELINES FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AND SELF-HARM MANAGEMENT

Recognizing that suicide prevention is a critical aspect of student mental health, this college adopts the **UMMEED Guidelines** as modified for higher education, in accordance with Mano Darpan Initiative standards[4].

8.1 Warning Signs and Risk Assessment

8.1.1 Feelings Associated with Risk

Students at risk may express:

- **Hopelessness:** "Things will never get better," "There is no point in trying"
- **Helplessness:** "No one can help me," "I cannot see a way out"
- **Worthlessness:** "I'm useless," "I am not important to anyone"
- **Guilt and Shame:** "I am a burden," "I am ashamed of myself"
- **Exhaustion:** Feeling physically and emotionally drained
- **Persistent Sadness:** Continuous low mood[4]

8.1.2 Behavioral Warning Signs

- Withdrawal from friends, family, and social activities
- Decline in academic performance
- Sudden mood changes or extreme irritability
- Increased substance use or reckless behavior
- Neglect of personal care and appearance
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Verbal cues: "I won't be around," "My problems will end soon"
- Talking about self-harm or ending life
- Destroying personal belongings
- Giving away possessions without reason
- Unusual preoccupation with death or suicide

8.2 Risk Factors and Protective Factors

8.2.1 Risk Factors to Monitor

Individual Level:

- History of depression or other mental health disorders
- Previous attempts at self-harm or suicide
- Substance abuse or addiction
- Academic failure or repeated poor performance

- Social isolation and loneliness
- Chronic health conditions or chronic pain

College/Academic Level:

- Excessive academic pressure and competition
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Social rejection or peer conflict
- Failure in examination or dismissal from program
- Transition periods (first year, semester changes)
- Performance expectations exceeding capabilities

Family and Social Level:

- Family conflict, domestic violence, or abuse
- Loss of a loved one
- Financial hardship
- Parental pressure for specific career/grades
- Social stigma and isolation
- Lack of social support network[4]

8.2.2 Protective Factors to Strengthen

- Positive self-esteem and self-worth
- Effective problem-solving and coping skills
- Strong social support networks
- Sense of belonging to college community
- Engagement in meaningful activities
- Regular exercise and healthy habits
- Purpose and future orientation
- Access to mental health services
- Supportive relationships with faculty and peers
- Cultural and spiritual beliefs supporting life

8.3 Immediate Response Protocol for At-Risk Students

8.3.1 When Warning Signs Are Identified

By Any Student, Faculty, or Staff Member:

Approach with Care

- Approach the student calmly and privately
- Show genuine concern without judgment
- Listen attentively to their feelings

8.3.2 In Cases of Acute Risk or Attempted Self-Harm

Immediate Actions:

Ensure Physical Safety

- Remove any means of self-harm immediately
- Provide first aid if needed; call emergency services for medical emergencies
- Do not leave the student alone

Involve College Administration

- Notify the Principal immediately
- Alert the Officials
- Contact parents/guardians without delay (with sensitivity and privacy)
- Arrange emergency psychiatric evaluation if necessary

Professional Referral

- Refer student to psychiatrist or mental health professional for evaluation
- Arrange hospitalization if recommended by mental health professional
- Provide parents with referral information and resources
- Follow up to ensure student receives recommended care

Documentation and Follow-Up

- Maintain detailed records of assessment and interventions
- Schedule regular follow-up with student upon return to college
- Coordinate with external providers
- Ensure ongoing support and monitoring

8.4 Post-Crisis Support and Follow-Up

- **Immediate Follow-up:** Within 24-48 hours of crisis
- **Ongoing Counselling:** Regular sessions (weekly or bi-weekly minimum)
- **Academic Accommodations:** Flexible deadlines, exam adjustments, course load modifications
- **Peer Support:** Connection with peer support groups or mentors
- **Family Involvement:** Parent consultations and guidance (with student consent)
- **Regular Check-ins:** Periodic contact with student to ensure ongoing well-being

- Ensure the student feels supported

Encourage Professional Help

- Suggest the student speak with the college counsellor
- Provide counselling room location and contact information
- Offer to accompany the student if helpful

By the College Counsellor:

Initial Assessment

- Meet with the student in a private, comfortable space
- Maintain confidentiality and ensure safety
- Conduct a thorough assessment of:
 - Current emotional state and stressors
 - Presence and severity of suicidal/self-harm thoughts
 - Intent and plan (if thoughts are present)
 - Access to means (methods) of self-harm
 - Previous attempts and family history
 - Current support systems and coping strategies

Risk Assessment

- Determine level of risk: **Low, Moderate, or High**
- Document findings in counselling record
- Establish safety plan with student

Immediate Intervention

- Provide emotional support and validation
- Collaborate with student to develop safety plan:
 - Identify warning signs and triggers
 - List coping strategies and resources
 - Identify emergency contacts
 - Remove access to means of self-harm (if present)
- Arrange regular follow-up sessions
- Monitor student progress closely

8.5 College Community Support

- **Faculty Notification:** Inform relevant faculty in sensitive manner to facilitate academic support
- **Peer Support Network:** Engage classmates and friends in supportive role (with student consent)
- **Classroom Accommodations:** Coordinate with faculty for any needed academic adjustments
- **Celebration of Recovery:** Recognize student's progress and resilience

9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

9.1 Confidentiality Policy

General Confidentiality

- All counselling records and student disclosures are strictly confidential
- Counsellor shall not disclose information without student's informed written consent
- Information shared with Counsellor remains protected by confidentiality privilege

Exceptions to Confidentiality

Confidentiality may be broken (without student consent) when:

- Student poses immediate danger to themselves or others
- Student discloses ongoing abuse or exploitation of a minor
- Law enforcement or court order requires disclosure
- Mandatory reporting is legally required
- Information is needed to prevent serious harm

Emergency Situations

- In case of immediate risk to student's safety, counsellor may disclose information to:
 - Parents/guardians
 - College administration and Principal
 - Emergency medical services
 - Law enforcement (if necessary)
- Information shared shall be limited to what is necessary to ensure safety

9.2 Record Keeping and Security

Secure Storage

- All counselling records maintained in locked, secure file
- Access restricted to Counsellor and authorized College Authorities
- Separate from student academic records

Retention

- Records maintained during student enrollment and for minimum 3-5 years after graduation
- Destroyed securely after retention period expires

Student Access Rights

- Students may request access to their counselling records
- Process: Submit written request to Officials
- Counsellor may prepare summary or redacted version if appropriate

9.3 Ethical Principles

The Counsellor shall adhere to:

- **Indian Psychological Association (IPA) Code of Ethics** (if member)
- **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Standards** (if registered)
- **Professional Counselling Standards** and best practices
- **Informed Consent:** Clear explanation of counselling process, limits of confidentiality, and alternatives
- **Competence:** Providing services only within scope of professional training and expertise
- **Dual Relationships:** Avoiding conflicts of interest; not providing counselling to close friends or family
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Respecting diversity and cultural differences in counselling approach
- **Professional Boundaries:** Maintaining appropriate professional relationships with students

10. SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESOURCES

10.1 Internal Resources

Faculty and Staff Support

- Training in mental health awareness
- Consultation resources for identifying at-risk students
- Support in facilitating referrals

Academic Support Services

- Academic counselling and tutoring
- Study skills workshops
- Career guidance and placement support
- Learning disability accommodations

10.2 External Resources and Referral Networks

National Helplines and Resources:

Resource	Contact	Services
Mano Darpan National Helpline	844-844-0632	Toll-free, 24/7 psychosocial support
Tele MANAS	Varies by state	Tele-mental health services across India
AASRA Suicide Prevention	9820466726	Mumbai-based suicide prevention helpline
iCall Foundation	9152987821	Mental health support, crisis intervention

Local Pune Resources:

Psychiatric Services

- [Mental health clinics and psychiatrists in Pune]
- [Hospital emergency services with psychiatric units]

Counselling Services

- [Private and NGO-based counselling services]
- [University counselling services]

Community Support

- [Mental health awareness organizations]
- [Substance abuse treatment centers]
- [Emergency medical services]

10.3 Referral Process

Assessment and Recommendation

- Counsellor assesses need for external referral
- Discusses with student and recommends specialist

Information Sharing

- Provide student with referral details (name, address, phone, specialization)
- Explain purpose and expected process
- Obtain student consent for information sharing with external provider

Follow-Up

- Track whether student follows through on referral
- Maintain coordination with external provider (with student consent)
- Continue support and monitoring through process

11. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

11.1 Counsellor Professional Development

Areas of Focus

- Suicide prevention and crisis intervention
- Trauma-informed counselling
- Substance abuse and addiction counselling
- Cultural competence and sensitivity
- College student mental health issues
- Ethical standards and professional boundaries

11.2 Faculty and Staff Training

Mental Health Awareness Orientation

- Annual training for all faculty and administrative staff
- Duration: Minimum 2-3 hours per year
- Content: Warning signs, supportive responses, referral process, resources

Training Modules

- Recognizing mental health concerns and warning signs
- De-escalation and crisis response
- Confidentiality and ethical considerations
- Resources and referral procedures
- Supporting vulnerable students (first-generation, LGBTQ+, minority students)

Responsibility of College Counsellor

- Provide orientation at beginning of academic year
- Update training annually or when guidelines change
- Make available resource materials and handouts

11.3 Student Awareness and Education

Peer Counsellor/Mano Mitra Training

- Select and train interested students
- Basic mental health awareness and supportive listening skills

- Crisis response protocols
- Boundaries and referral processes
- Regular supervision and support

Campus Awareness Programs

- Mental health awareness weeks/months
- Workshops on stress management, resilience, healthy relationships
- Seminars on suicide prevention and self-harm awareness
- Open discussions and de-stigmatization campaigns
- Frequency: Minimum 3-4 programs per academic year

Educational Materials

- Brochures and pamphlets on mental health
- Posters with helpline numbers and resources
- Digital resources and website information
- Mobile-friendly information on counselling services

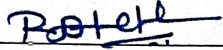
APPROVAL AND SIGNATURES

This Mental Health and Counselling Policy is approved and adopted by Huzurpaga Shrimati Durgabai Mukunddas Lohia Mahila Vanijya Mahavidyalaya, Pune

For Principal

Name: Dr. Rupali B. Sheth

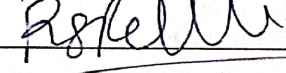
Date: 19/1/2026

Signature: 

Manager/Governing Body Representative

Name: Rekha Palshikar

Date: 19/1/2026

Signature: 

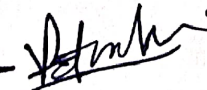
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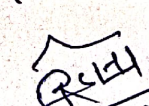
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