



Utrecht
University

Student & Academic
Affairs Office



Student well-being action plan

2022-2025

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and the
project

INTRODUCTION

Utrecht University (UU) wants to contribute to a positive and successful student life. Encountering various challenges are part of daily life, and usually lead to an exciting and enjoyable time. Yet, as with most challenges, it can all feel demanding, confusing, and difficult at times. Also, it may affect a student's well-being. At UU, students' well-being and vitality are very important and a priority that UU takes very seriously.

Since 2018, there has been a significant increase in the attention given by academic institutions and the public to improving student well-being. In response to this, a UU Student Well-being Taskforce was formed in 2018 with the aim of advising the Executive Board on the action to be taken in this field. The first work programme (between 2019-2022) was set up and evaluated. To continue its university-wide efforts and maintain the focus on improving student well-being at Utrecht University, a new and ambitious work programme for Student Well-being for 2022-2025 was set up at the start of 2022.

UU monitors the well-being of its students through various sources, such as National Monitor of Trimbos and RIVM, the Caring Universities surveys, the NSE and UU studies like Belonging@UU and student evaluations. The UU Strategic Plan 2025 sets out in writing the ambition to support students in discovering and developing their personal and professional identity. This is because in recent years the feeling of work pressure among students has increased. Students feel insecure and increasingly experience pressure to perform. The work programme and action plan aim to support this goal.

This action plan sets out the vision, mission, scope, governance, participation of faculties and implementation of the Student Well-being work programme (2022-2025). The goal of this plan is to create an overview of the efforts needed to achieve our goals within the timeframe of the work programme, to focus on the achievability of the goals, to make clear which actors are needed and what tasks they are responsible for, and to make the goals more specific so that they can be monitored.

VISION

Utrecht University wants to help students develop skills for the 21st century and guide them through their growth in life and any additional stumbling blocks they may encounter.

AT UU, STUDENT WELL-BEING IS DEFINED AS:

A sustainable positive psychological state, characterised by **resilience**, **satisfaction with oneself**, **establishing relationships and gaining experiences during their studies**, in which students can **cope with the normal stresses of life** and realise their own abilities.

Students indicate¹ that well-being at UU is about feeling supported, feeling welcome, feeling understood, feeling challenged and feeling connected.

MISSION

The student well-being mission of Utrecht University for 2025 is to facilitate an environment where students at UU:

- acknowledge and speak openly about mental health
- take care of their own and each other's well-being and know where to find help
- feel safe and welcome within the UU community

SCOPE

By initiating this university-wide programme, UU wants to start a movement to speak openly about mental health. We focus on all first-year, senior and international students and aim to support improvements in the guidance and development of students, whether or not within the regular support chain. Innovations and new initiatives could be both adopted and integrated within the regular support chain. It is extremely important to involve not only students, but all staff within UU who have direct and indirect contact with students. The well-being of both students and staff is very important for the impact of the movement and both are in scope for this work programme.

At the same time, we have to be realistic and recognise that students' well-being depends on many more factors than the study climate and environment during their studies. Defining and improving students' well-being within the community also imply exploring the responsibility of UU interacting with other social and health actors.

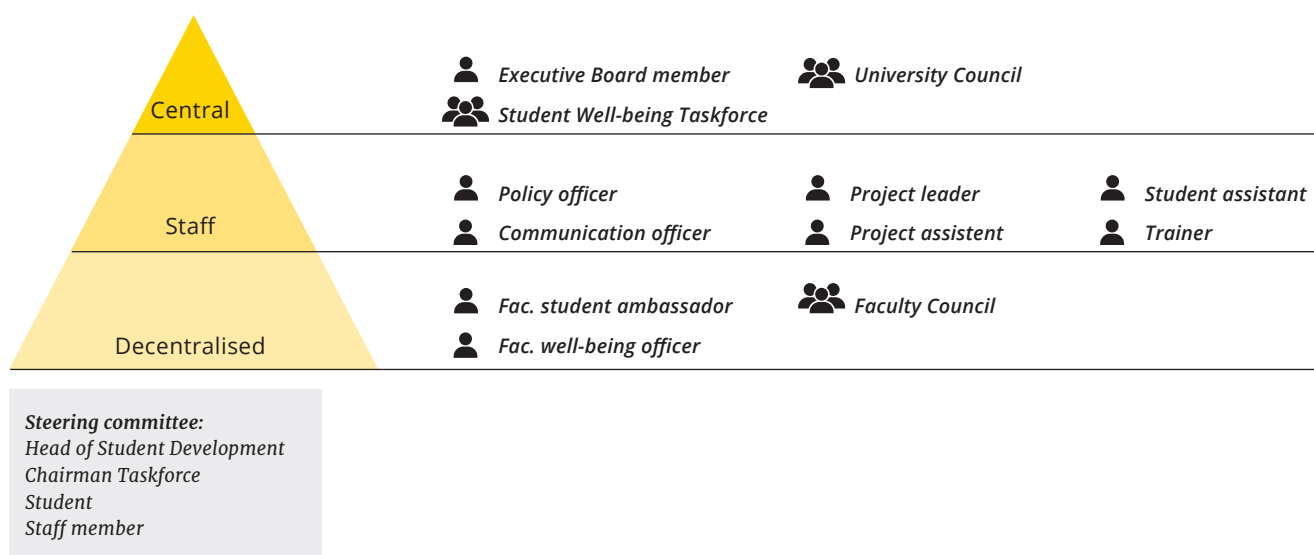
1. In focus groups organized October 2021

GOVERNANCE

We are not alone in the movement to raise awareness of and improve students' well-being. The goal is to include as many students and staff as possible in implementing the work programme in order to achieve our student well-being goals.

In order to do so and to be able to implement the work programme, it is important that the governance is taken into account. As can be seen in the triangle, the implementation of the work programme is divided into three levels within the organisation: central, staff and decentralised levels.

Governance well-being



The central level contains the Executive Board, the Student Well-being Taskforce and the University Council. These actors have a role in the composition of the new work programme and evaluate the action being taken. Alongside these actors that are already established within the university, a new body of the organisation will be introduced: the steering committee. The steering committee gives substantive and practical input in the activities and projects of the work programme.

In addition to the central level, there are the staff and decentralised levels. These can also be seen as the executive student well-being team. The staff level contains personnel at central university level who are involved in the activities and projects on a daily basis. This level maintains an overview of all initiatives and checks whether the goals of the work programme are being achieved. The staff also makes sure that the decentralised level is well-informed and involved in the projects.

Lastly, the decentralised level concerns the various faculties and departments of the university. The projects and activities within the work programme will largely have to be placed with the various decentralised layers of the university. To achieve this, a faculty student ambassador and a faculty well-being officer will be appointed. The faculty student ambassador will build a bridge between the student well-being projects and initiatives and the students themselves. The faculty well-being officers will help in implementing the action plan within their own faculties.

PARTICIPATION OF FACULTIES

To make the student well-being work programme (2022-2025) a success, collaboration with and between faculties is crucial. To ensure that the faculties are properly informed about the initiatives and to give them the opportunity to help create them, the faculties are heavily involved at an early stage during the implementation of the work programme. Working together is of great importance to enhance well-being throughout the entire university. Therefore, a strong emphasis on bringing together and involving faculties will be incorporated.

To achieve this, the faculty well-being officers will contact their faculties for their participation if and where possible and desired. They will be the bridge between the central level and the decentralised level. Therefore it is important that they are informed about the needs of the students and staff within their faculty. The network of faculty well-being officers will be formalised before the start of the work programme. The results of each project and the mid-term evaluation and review will be shared with the vice-deans and the Education Network.

In order to establish a lasting collaboration between the decentralised and the central levels, the faculty well-being officers, student ambassador and central staff will need to work together on a regular basis. In order to do so, contact persons will be appointed on the central level.



“Well-being is a prerequisite for learning: if you are not comfortable in your own skin, you cannot grow. Students are with us during a crucial period of their development – if it goes well, they will take that with them for the rest of their lives.”

Berent Prakken

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME (2022-2025)

The framework of the student well-being work programme of the Utrecht University is based upon four pillars. These pillars have been taken from the definition of student well-being as described earlier:



These different pillars have the following objectives/descriptions:

- **Learn:** Guide students through their emerging adulthood, enable students to acknowledge, learn about and internalise mental well-being and health
- **Focus:** Provide students with training and tools to deal with stress, enhance their self-acceptance and autonomy and ability to cope with varying circumstances
- **Engage:** Encourage students to connect and engage with fellow students and peers in an open and inclusive environment
- **Support:** Stimulate students to talk about and take care of their mental well-being and seek help for their mental health, personal or financial issues

These four different pillars are set out in this action plan in various (quantified) goals and activities/projects. The intensity and resources are also described for each pillar. This has been formulated for a period until the summer of 2025.



*Good health and well-being
are crucial ingredients
for a positive and succesful
student life*



Pillar 1: Learn

The first pillar of the action plan is the pillar 'learn'. The main goal of this pillar is to give students the opportunity to learn more about well-being and inform them about this topic in various ways.

(QUANTIFIED) GOALS	ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS	INTENSITY	DESCRIPTION
Goal: Prevention and students' knowledge & development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As of July 2023, there are 10 modules in the Caring Universities (CU) app - Active usage of Caring Universities (CU) (>2000) 	Extend online E-health Caring Universities (CU) with 3 extra modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate staff for the steering committees and internal communication - Communicate the new e-health modules to the students - Give feedback to CU about the new modules through the steering committee 	● ○ ○ ○ 6 months	Partnership with Caring Universities implies that we are actively participating in projects and initiatives initiated by CU. Project organisation intends to extend the amount of modules with 3 extra modules.
Goal: Monitor students' mental well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Average UU response rate of 20% for the yearly Caring Universities (CU) questionnaire 	Caring Universities' mental health monitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate staff for the steering committees and internal communication - Analyse & communicate about the institution-specific reports - Promote the yearly Caring Universities 	● ○ ○ ○ 48 months	Caring Universities monitors mental well-being through a yearly questionnaire.
Goal: Offer students the opportunity to receive more information about well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All faculties have a communication plan that is close to students for well-being services - Regular input sessions are organised with study associations and student ambassadors 	Organise initiatives close to students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise input sessions with students, study associations and faculty to gather input and ideas for well-being initiatives - Make an overview of all the initiatives currently set out at faculty and central level - Facilitate student ambassadorship - Facilitate workshops about improving well-being for study associations 	● ● ○ ○ 48 months	Provide students with information and tools to learn more about mental health and well-being. Initiatives will be carried out in consultation with students, study associations and faculties.

Pillar 2: Focus

The second pillar of the action plan is the pillar 'focus'. The main goal of this pillar is to give students the opportunity to take action to improve their own well-being through various training and workshops.

(QUANTIFIED) GOALS	ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS	INTENSITY	DESCRIPTION
Goal: Offer students the opportunity to enhance their sense of belonging - 15% of all first-year bachelor students are offered a summer bridge programme in 2025	Warm welcome for first-year and international students - Integrate well-being in yearly and faculty introduction programme - Investigate whether a summer bridge programme is being used within faculties (in close collaboration with the warm welcome team for international students) - Organise input sessions with faculty well-being officers - Support faculties in implementing the programme	● ○ ○ ○ 18 months	Facilitate a warm welcome for all first-year and international students. Students are prepared for the start of their study programme. They are informed about everything they need to kickstart their university career.
Goal: Facilitate services to enhance students' well-being skills and abilities - 10% of student cohort participate in student well-being workshops and training programmes in 2025	Continuous development of student well-being services - Organise input sessions with students to see which themes are currently missing in the well-being programme - Execute, develop and improve the university-wide student well-being training, workshops and coaching - Promote student well-being services amongst students	● ● ○ ○ 48 months	Extend training and workshop programme for student well-being by adding themes so that it responds to social developments.
Goal: Create awareness for well-being amongst students - >2500 students participate each year in the Wellbeing Week in 2025	Increased awareness through Wellbeing Week - Organise Wellbeing Week - Enhance faculty communication about Wellbeing Week - Inform student support staff and teachers about the Wellbeing Week - Organise input sessions with students about the communication	● ● ○ ○ 28 months	Give more attention to the student Wellbeing Week throughout the university (central and faculty) to increase participation. Ask students how they want to be informed about these kinds of activities.
Goal: Create awareness for student well-being amongst staff - >10% of staff participate in well-being training programme in 2025	Involvement of staff with student well-being - Implement training programme: 'staff supports students' - Communicate about the staff training programme	● ● ○ ○ 16 months	Provide staff who are involved with the students (think of teachers and study advisors) with the right information on student well-being. This will be done by developing a training programme 'staff supports students'.

Pillar 3: Engage

The third pillar of the action plan is the pillar 'engage'. The main goal of this pillar is to stimulate an open and inclusive community in the university in which talking about well-being is encouraged.

(QUANTIFIED) GOALS	ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS	INTENSITY	DESCRIPTION
Goal: Offer students the opportunity to enhance their sense of belonging and social integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7% of the senior student population participate actively in a Mentor academy - Sense of belonging@UU measures 	Every first-year student has a mentor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate and initiate a Mentor academy in close collaboration with faculties 	● ● ● ○ 12 months	Student mentorship means that senior students guide groups of first-year students. The Taskforce wants to give every first-year student the ability and opportunity to experience this and wants to facilitate this programme throughout the whole university.
Goal: Enhance students' vitality and facilitate a safe, open and engaging environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student living room(s) - >2000 yearly usage of the Mindfulness - Positive evaluation of the Mindfulness 	Facilitate social engagement close to students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make a design for the student living room together with study associations - Set up the student living rooms on campus (Utrecht Science Park and City Centre) - Evaluate how the Mindfulness is being perceived by students 	● ● ○ ○ 4 months	Facilitate student living room(s) (e.g. relaxing spaces, the Mindfulness). Closely involve students in creating and facilitating those living rooms on all our campuses.

Pillar 4: Support

Lastly, the ‘support’ pillar aims to encourage students to talk about their mental well-being, health, personal and financial issues. By encouraging students to seek help and making sure there are various ways of doing so, the university wants to make sure that students who need help are supported.

(QUANTIFIED) GOALS	ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS	INTENSITY	DESCRIPTION
Goal: Students know where to ask for help - In 2025, >60% of the students will know about the student support chain	Availability of online support - Continue research on MyUU app and the implementation of online well-being features - Organise input sessions with students to find out how they want to be communicated with online - Encourage visibility of the student support chain through communication	● ◐ ○ ○ 48 months	Investigate whether the MyUU app can be used for other functionalities and can help inform students about student well-being. In addition, ongoing research will be done around improving the digital well-being services.
Goal: Peer2peer coaching for students by students - Vision on duty of care - Positive student evaluation of peer2peer support groups - Integrated peer2peer services in well-being support - Formalise partnerships with caring partners	Intensify peer2peer support - Investigate and intensify collaboration with external partners who offer (peer2peer) student support - Develop, execute/facilitate and evaluate peer2peer support groups guided by trained experts by experience, to support students in their study progress and improve well-being - Organise and facilitate structural meetings with external caring partners	● ○ ○ ○ 24 months	Investigate and intensify collaboration with external caring partners that are available for students and have expertise in well-being.



“To me, student well-being within UU means a positive physical and mental state, being there for each other, respecting each other and enjoying your student life together.”

Sebastiaan Verschuren, student

PROJECT PLANNING

Lastly, the work programme will be started in the third semester of 2022. The projects and activities set out in the work programme will be implemented at various times over the next four years as shown in the project planning below. After the second semester of 2024, a mid-term review will take place to check whether the planning of the projects and activities is going well and whether any adjustment is needed.

PILLAR	PROJECT	2022		2023				2024				2025				2026	
		3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2
Learn	Extend online E-health with 3 extra modules																
Learn	Caring Universities' mental health monitors																
Learn	Organise initiatives close to students																
Focus	Warm welcome for first year and international students																
Focus	Continuous development of student well-being services																
Focus	Increased awareness through Well-being Weeks																
Focus	Involvement of staff with student well-being																
Engage	Every first-year student has a mentor																
Engage	Facilitate social engagement close to students																
Support	Availability of online support																
Support	Intensify Peer2Peer support																

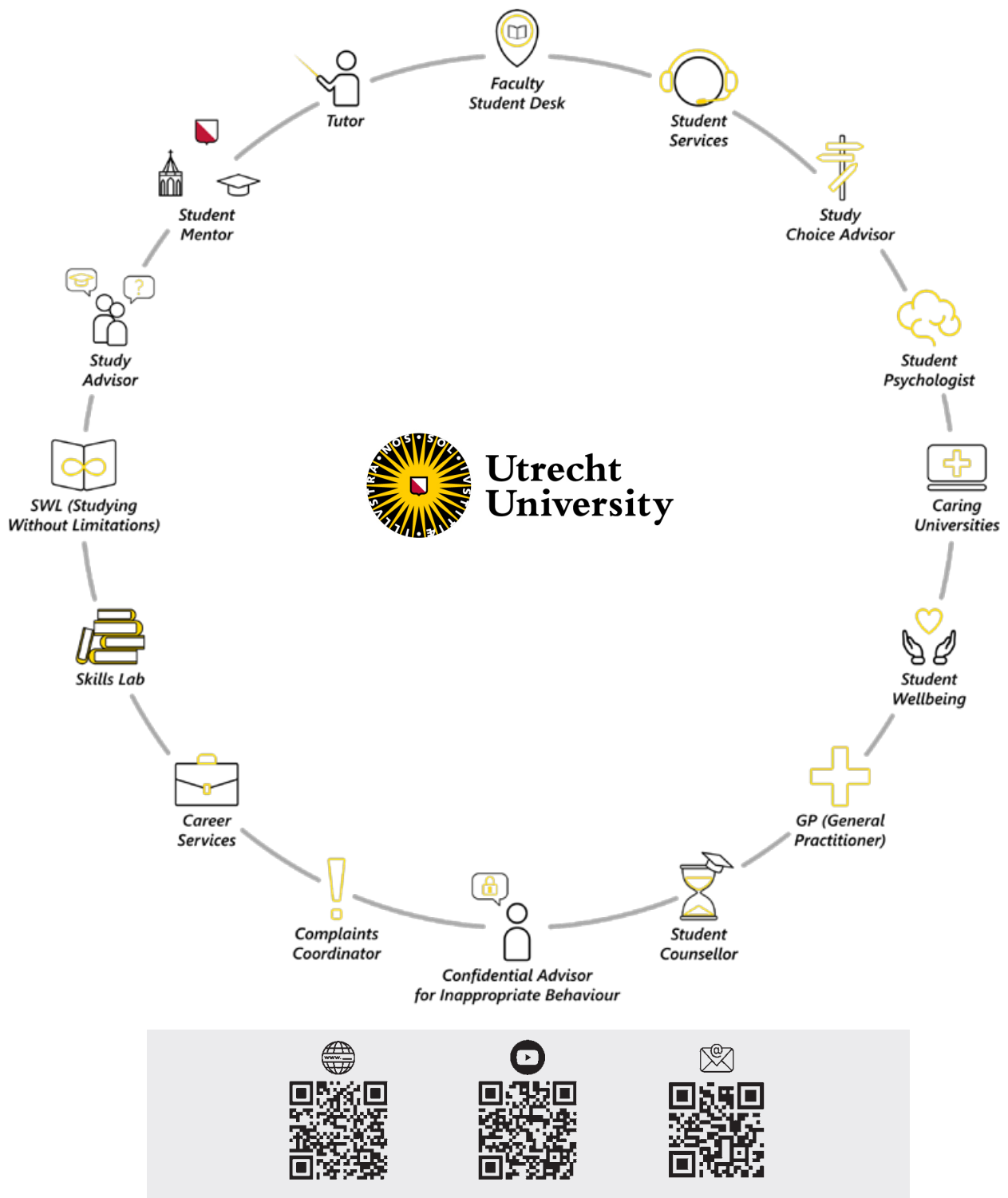
Mid-term review

MONITORING AND EXECUTION

The progress of the various projects and goals will be monitored throughout the period of the work programme (2022-2025). In addition, a mid-term evaluation will be made in mid-2024. This mid-term review will serve a checkpoint to see whether the goals of the work programme will be achieved within the given timeframe. Adjustments can be made on the basis of the mid-term evaluation.

Throughout the entire programme the various projects and activities will be monitored. Monitoring and measuring are excellent additions to the work programme and ensure that the activities and projects carried out are contributing to the final picture. Nonetheless, monitoring and measuring are not always preferred, especially when it comes to mental health and the pressure to perform which are often impossible to measure correctly. The programme is also about a cultural change within the university, which cannot always be measured.

UU Guidance & Development



*There could be additional counsellors for guidance within a certain study programme.
Additional counsellors can be found on the study's webpages.*



Utrecht University
Student & Academic Affairs Office
Heidelberglaan 8
3584 CS Utrecht
The Netherlands
www.uu.nl/en
students.uu.nl/en



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