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# The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



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### **1. What is a Standard?**

A Standard is an expected level of performance that is considered by an authority, expert or by general consent to be an approved model. A Standard stipulates minimum requirements for the use, safety and/or design of products, processes and services. The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students would be considered a “process.”

### **2. What is the scope of the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students (the Standard)?**

The Standard will provide a framework and guidance on protecting and promoting the mental health of post-secondary students and is anticipated to include mental health awareness, promotion, prevention, intervention, accommodation and training. It will include benchmarks to measure success in meeting the Standard established. This will be further defined by the Technical Committee as they are informed by the work of the environmental scan and national consultations.

### **3. What are the key project objectives?**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) has the following project objectives:

1. Champion the development of a National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students;
2. Engage key project and community stakeholders (stakeholders defined below) to develop a Standard (and related products) that is relevant, evidence-informed, and practical for post-secondary institutions across Canada to effectively protect and promote mental health of students;
3. Develop key tools and resources for post-secondary institutions to assist with the implementation of the Standard;
4. Drive uptake of the Standard among post-secondary institutions; and
5. Build evidence to showcase the impact of the Standard on student success.

### **4. Who will be impacted by the Standard?**

Post-secondary students, colleges, universities, polytechnic institutions, CECEPS, staff/faculty, and unions will be directly impacted by the Standard. Indirect impact, related to improved student mental health and student success in post-secondary institutions, will be felt by students’ social networks and support environments such as, families, caregivers, faith-based groups, etc.

### **5. Who would implement the Standard?**

The Standard is voluntary and could be considered for uptake by any college, university, technical institution or CEGEP. This Standard will be based on a collective approach model, which means that a successful implementation of the Standard will require input and feedback from students, staff, faculty, and administrators, etc. It is likely that the Standard implementation process will be led by the designated administrative office in the post-secondary institution most concerned with student success.

**6. Will this Standard be taking a “full campus approach” – meaning will it include faculty, staff and students?**

The focus of the Standard is the student; however, we encourage institutions to consider the [National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safe in the Workplace](#) (launched 2013 and is aimed at all workplaces in Canada for staff and volunteers) to be adopted simultaneously or even in advance of adopting the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students.

**7. Will the Standard be voluntary?**

The Standard will be voluntary – unless referenced in legislation or regulation.

**8. Who is being consulted and what stakeholders are going to be involved?**

We will be working with our partners and leaders in this sector to do broad consultations and engagement across the country. The goal is to be inclusive, accessible and include colleges, universities, technical institutions, CEGEPS, their students, government bodies, associations, families, staff, faculty, unions, support services and organizations, specifically this will include Francophone, Indigenous peoples, people with lived experiences and their families and caregivers.

**9. Who is funding this project?**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is leading the project in partnership with the CSA Group. The project has been generously funded by Bell Let’s Talk, The Rossy Family Foundation, The RBC Foundation and Health Canada.

**10. What issues are going to be focused on by this initiative?**

- To address student mental health at their various stages of their post-secondary careers, their state of well-being and/or mental illness.
- To promote a more collaborative approach to promoting mental health for students by clearly identifying the shared responsibilities of students, staff, and faculty.
- To decrease stigma and increase help seeking behavior in students.
- To increase mental health literacy in both students and staff.

**11. What difference will the Standard make in student mental health?**

Having a National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety for Post-Secondary Students will provide institutions with a framework and guidelines reflective of the best practices and supportive of future new practices to protect and promote student mental health, thereby promoting student success.

**12. What is the difference between a Standard and a Mental Health Strategy?**

Usually a Mental Health Strategy provides a roadmap on how to improve current programs, develop new programs and how to address any existing gaps. The Standard will set a national framework and measurements to benchmark a Mental Health Strategy. For example, a Mental

Health Strategy may identify a gap around accessibility to mental health support. A Standard could describe what would be acceptable as a baseline for accessibility to mental health support. A Standard would also inform an existing Mental Health Strategy being used in a post-secondary institution to ensure all elements student mental health are considered.

**13. Will the Standard be referenced in legislation, regulation, licensing, and accreditation?**

Much like the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students will be voluntary. It is hoped that over time the Student Standard will be referenced in future legislation, regulation, licensing and accreditation.

**14. How will the Standard ensure that students have the support they need, when needed?**

The Standard itself cannot ensure that students have the support they need, when needed. This can only be achieved through sustained efforts by institutions, service providers and the students themselves (via help seeking behaviours and other self-help tools). What the Standard offers is a framework that ensures that institutions know what is expected at a minimum to support the psychological health and safety of their students.

**15. Is this Standard ONLY for students with mental illness?**

The Standard applies to all post-secondary students, including students who are living with a mental illness. This Standard will also be applicable to students throughout their entire time at a post-secondary institution. In addition, this Standard will also be applicable to post-secondary students on or off campus/distant learners, international and domestic students, students living with disabilities, etc.

The goal of the Standard is to allow post-secondary institutions to put a framework in place to protect and promote the mental health of students to support their success.

**16. Are you researching all the mental illnesses?**

We will not be researching mental illness. The focus of the Standard is what can be done to protect and promote student mental health and to support student success.

**17. How are post-secondary students being defined?**

Post-secondary students will be defined as individuals enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution. These could include emerging adults between the ages of 16 and 25, older students and returning students as the baseline group and will be further defined as:

- transition into post-secondary phases (first year),
- progress through the post-secondary tenure (intermediate year)
- transition beyond the post-secondary experience (graduate)  
(graduate student with ages that will typically range higher than the baseline group)

**18. How will post-secondary students be represented, directly and indirectly, during this initiative?**

Post-secondary students will have direct representation and indirect representation through student organizations at the Executive Advisory Committee, the Technical Committee, through national consultations and student focus groups.

Indirect representation will occur through the information gathered during the environmental scoping review and from on-line forms and emails directed to the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

**19. Will faculty and staff need to become mental health “professionals” for students?**

No, they will not – the Standard will provide faculty and staff with tools, support and resources to promote and support psychological health and safety on campus.

**20. We already have programs and support services at our institution – how is duplication avoided?**

There will be an Environmental Scoping Review. (FAQ 23). From this review we will learn about the many outstanding programs and promising practices that currently exist and reference them within the Standard. Any potential gaps will be identified and recommendations made. If you are aware of exemplary practices, programs, and supports available at your institution, please reach out to us at [studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca).

**21. When will the Standard be made available / accessible and how?**

The Standard will be made available by the fall of 2019 or early 2020. It will be accessible to anyone by downloading from the CSA Group website. The Standard will be available free of charge for the first five years (from the time of launch) in both official languages to download.

**22. Will the Standard be available in both official languages?**

Yes.

**23. How will the Standard be developed?**

The steps include:

- An Executive Advisory Committee, a Project Team and a Technical Committee has been convened to provide oversight, planning and to develop the Standard.
- An environmental scoping review is underway to define the current state of post-secondary students experience and post-secondary institutional experiences relative to psychological health and safety. This will include identifying new and emerging strategies and best practices both nationally and internationally.
- There will be a series of national consultations and individual stakeholder consultations to secure feedback.

- The results of the environmental scoping review and the consultations will be included into a working document (a Seed Document) which will provide guidance in development of the Standard
- The Technical Committee will develop the Standard using a consensus-based approach during six (two day) meetings over a six-month period and formal communication with the use of ballots in between meetings.
- The Standard will go out for public review for two months with feedback being considered and integrated into the Standard.

#### **24. What is the “Environmental Scoping Review”?**

A research team, under the guidance of Dr. Heather Stuart, Queen’s University, will conduct a literature review and examine best practices that post-secondary institutions currently have. This information will be provided to the Technical Committee that is responsible for developing the Standard.

#### **25. What is the “Technical Committee”?**

The Technical Committee is the team of approximately 30 diverse experts and stakeholders in the field consisting of students, family, administrators, faculty, staff, union leaders from colleges, universities, technical institutes and CEGEPS. They will be responsible to develop and write the Standard. Each expert or stakeholder will become a member of the CSA Group.

#### **26. How are you going to measure the success of this initiative?**

Measurement of success will initially include uptake and implementation of the Standard. During the process of the Standard development specific measures of student health, safety and wellness will be defined.

#### **27. How will the Standard specifically address the needs of post-secondary students?**

This will be defined by the Technical Committee during the development of the Standard.

#### **28. If an institution wants to get involved, what support and resources can be expected from the project?**

The information and tools available on the MHCC website now include:

- A consultation package – for holding your own focus group and returning results to the Mental Health Commission of Canada
- Posters with information about the project – printable or to share on internal websites
- National consultation dates for 2018 and 2019
- Contact email to ask questions or share ideas

#### **29. How can I get involved?**

You can get involved by emailing the Mental Health Commission of Canada at [studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca)

### 30. How do I get more information?

Go to the Mental Health Commission of Canada webpage:

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/post-secondary-students-standard>



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