



## Reflection Tool

# Aligning with the Post-Secondary Student Standard



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

## Introduction to the Reflection Tool

The ***National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students*** (the Standard) is a flexible, voluntary set of guidelines to help your institution promote and improve student mental health and well-being.

This tool is designed to spark thinking and conversation about how the Standard connects to work already underway at your institution. It isn't a checklist or an audit tool. Instead, it offers space to pause, reflect, and explore ways to keep building on ongoing efforts.

It takes time and effort to figure out how to put the Standard's recommendations into practice, even for those who have already adopted it. The goal of this tool is to encourage curiosity, creativity, and ongoing learning, recognizing that every institution's journey will look different.

# How to use the Reflection Tool

Like the Standard, this tool is flexible and designed to meet you where you are. Think of it as a choose-your-own-adventure resource—move through the sections that are most relevant to you and/or your institution’s priorities or current stage of work with the Standard.

You can use this tool at any point in your journey—whether you are just starting, actively implementing the Standard, or reflecting on progress and next steps. The tool contains reflection questions that will help you brainstorm where to focus energy and resources to meet your institution’s unique needs.



## There are several ways to use this tool:

- Work through it **individually** for self-reflection.
- Use it **collaboratively** as an exercise with other staff, faculty, or students to support shared conversation.
- **Focus on certain sections** that address your institution’s priorities.

While you can use the sections of the tool in any order that suits your needs, the sections follow the same structure as the Standard. For easy reference, the numbering in each heading corresponds to the numbering of the sections in the Standard (e.g., Leadership, 5.2.2). Additional resources are linked throughout to provide further guidance where relevant, including the **Standard Support Tools**, a series of eight supplementary resources aligned with specific topics in the Standard.

# Reflecting on Your Role

Students, staff, faculty, and community partners share responsibility for supporting campus mental health. At the same time, your own role, motivations and perspectives influence how you personally engage with this work.

**Reflecting on the following questions can help you sustain momentum and find new ways to contribute, regardless of your role or background.**

- What assumptions am I making about who this work is for?
- What is something I used to believe about this work that I've had to unlearn?
- Who energizes me in this work? When did I last reach out to them?
- What is one invitation I could extend to make this work more collective?
- What are some wins I can build on to keep this work moving forward?



## Topics

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## Leadership and commitment (5.2.2; 5.2.3.3)

- How does your institution support a holistic framework for student mental health and well-being?
- How does your institution's leadership show an ongoing commitment to the Standard?
- How does your institution ensure that there are resources (financial and human) dedicated to putting the Standard into action? Are there areas where resources are missing?
- What structures or roles does your institution have in place to guide this work (e.g., a dedicated lead, steering committee, working group)? What structures or roles could be strengthened or are missing?
- Who else on campus is involved in this work? Do they reflect the diversity of roles, departments, staff, and faculty at your institution?



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## Policy and practice (5.2.3)

- How are student mental health and well-being integrated into strategic goals, planning processes, and use of resources?
- How is mental health considered in the development of new policies, practices, and decisions?
- In what ways are equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility considered when reviewing or developing policies and practices?
- What processes exist to assess whether your institution's approach to student mental health is working? How are those insights used to make improvements?
- For further reflection on policy and practice, refer to the *Create a supportive, safe and inclusive environment* and *Accessibility* sections of this tool.
- For practical guidance, check out the **Executive Sponsor; and Examining Policies Through a Mental Health and Well-Being Lens** Standard Support Tool.

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## Privacy and confidentiality (5.2.4)

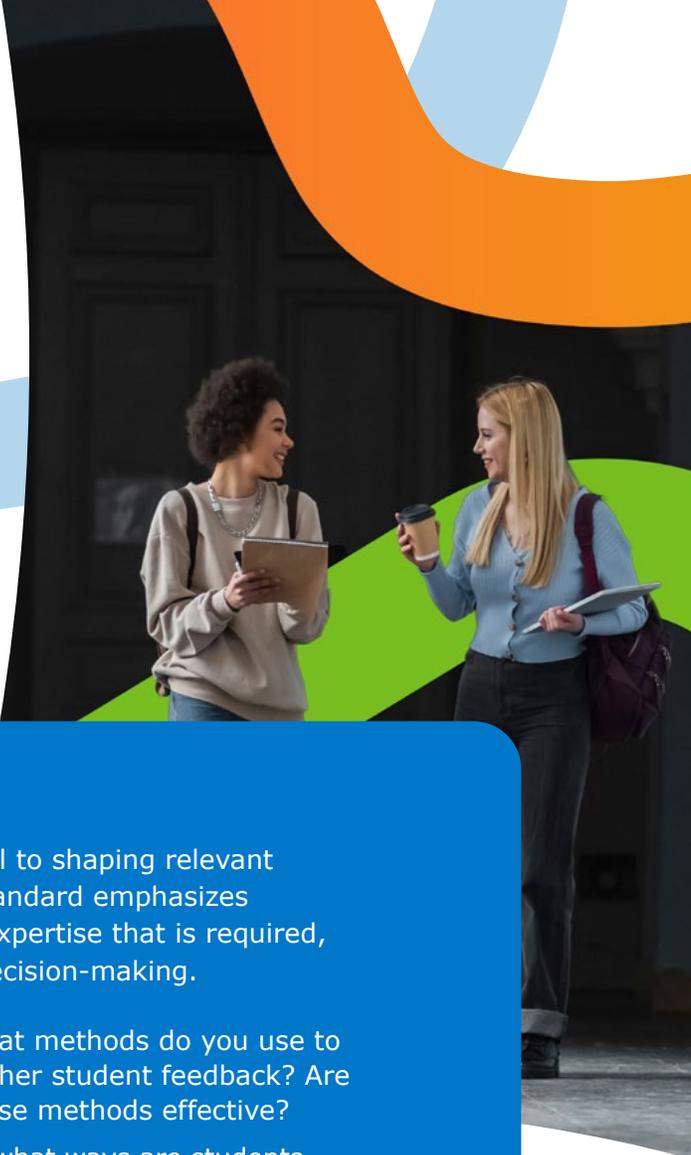
- When students share sensitive information, how do you ensure they know what will be kept private and what might be shared?
- How are staff and faculty supported to maintain confidentiality in their day-to-day interactions with students?
- In situations where safety concerns require exceptions to confidentiality policies, are there clear guidelines for what can and cannot be shared?
- For practical guidance, check out the **Privacy and Confidentiality** Standard Support Tool



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## Partner engagement (5.2.5)

- What are the key groups that play an important role in your institution's mental health efforts (e.g., students, staff/faculty, service providers/practitioners, community partners)?
- What departments, offices, or centres on campus do work associated with student mental health and the goals of the Standard?
- How do you seek input from interested parties to better understand their needs and what works for them?
- What steps do you take to engage partners meaningfully while ensuring diverse perspectives are represented?
- How do you share the outcomes of your engagement activities with your campus community in a way that is transparent, timely, and accessible?
- As a practical next step, consider completing a stakeholder map to help identify who needs to be involved in your institution's work with the Standard and how to engage them.



## Student engagement

Students are key partners whose perspectives are vital to shaping relevant and effective campus mental health initiatives. The Standard emphasizes student-centeredness, recognizing student voices as expertise that is required, valued, and that should be meaningfully included in decision-making.

### Consider the following:

- ▶ What processes are in place to guide meaningful student involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of mental health initiatives?
- ▶ How do you actively collaborate with student unions, associations, and groups for input and feedback?
- ▶ How do you ensure meaningful participation from equity-deserving groups, including but not limited to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students; students with disabilities; international students; 2SLGBTQ+ students; African, Caribbean, and Black students; and racially marginalized students?
- ▶ What methods do you use to gather student feedback? Are these methods effective?
- ▶ In what ways are students compensated for their time and expertise when contributing to initiatives?
- ▶ How does your institution demonstrate a commitment to using student feedback?
- ▶ For practical guidance on how to assess and improve student participation, check out the [\*\*IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation\*\*](#).

## Assessment of psychosocial factors (5.3.2)

- What day-to-day stressors most affect student mental health on your campus (e.g., workload, finances, housing, relationships, sense of belonging)?
- How does your institution consider the impact of systemic inequities when planning mental health strategies or supports?
- How does your institution help students navigate key transition points like admission, orientation, or graduation?
- How is student feedback used to shape your institution's mental health supports, programs, or policies?
- For practical guidance, check out the **Psychosocial Factors** Standard Support Tool.

### A whole-campus approach

Many institutions implementing the Post-Secondary Standard are also adopting the **National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace** to enhance support of their staff and faculty. Together, these standards provide guidance to create a whole-campus approach to mental health and well-being.

For practical guidance on alignment between the post-secondary Standard and the Workplace Standard, check out the **Alignment** Standard Support Tool.

## Data gathering (5.3.3)

- What student mental health data do you already collect? Where are there gaps?
- What institutional data do you already have (e.g., from policies, programs, services) that can be used to guide priorities and improvements?
- How well do your institution's current data collection methods give you the information you need to make evidence-based decisions?
- How do you ensure that data collection and analysis reflect diverse student experiences, including experiences of equity-deserving groups?
- How are findings reported back to leadership, staff, and students?
- What role does reporting play in prompting next steps or decisions?
- For practical guidance, check out the **Data Gathering and Evaluation** Standard Support Tool.

### Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey

Institutions use a range of approaches to gather insights into student mental health and well-being. Some have developed their own surveys, and others have used tools like the **Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS)** to inform planning and decision-making.

The CCWS is a tool to help post-secondary institutions collect the data they need to support student health and well-being. It supports assessment of health and well-being on campus, can help with identifying priorities for intervention, and can increase capacity to link research with policy and practice.

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## Creating a supportive, safe, and inclusive environment (5.4.2)

### **Reflect on your campus spaces:**

- How does the physical environment contribute to creating welcoming, safe, inclusive spaces where students can connect and feel a sense of community?
- What initiatives and practices exist to ensure supportive, safe, and inclusive learning environments?
- How are cultural and spiritual practices (e.g., multi-faith needs, smudging, prayer) supported?
- How are the unique needs of neurodivergent students being addressed?

### **Reflect on your institutional policies:**

- How well do institutional policies support safe, inclusive, accessible, and trauma-informed spaces across campus?
- What processes or policies are in place to prevent and respond to incidents of racism, bullying, sexual violence, and other forms of discrimination and oppression? How are these processes communicated to the campus community?
- How do equity-deserving groups contribute to the development of policies and practices that support safe and inclusive spaces?
- For practical guidance, check out the **Cultural Safety** and **Learning Environments** Standard Support Tools.



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## Literacy, education, and stigma reduction

(5.4.3)

- What training or awareness programs are in place to build mental health literacy for students, staff, and faculty? Where are there gaps that need to be addressed?
- How are students encouraged to seek mental health supports as part of their overall well-being, and not just when they are in crisis?
- How are students informed about available supports and services, including where and how to access them?
- How do literacy and awareness initiatives address the needs of students who may be accessing mental health and wellness services for the first time?
- How do you ensure awareness campaigns engage *all* students, including those who may not already be engaged in mental health conversations or programming?
- For practical training opportunities, check out the Mental Health Commission of Canada's training branch, **Opening Minds**.



## Accessibility (5.4.4)

- How does your institution support students to locate and understand accommodation policies? Where could this be improved?
- What barriers do students face when accessing or obtaining academic accommodations?
- What supports exist for students during critical events, such as mental health crises, bereavement, or caregiver responsibilities?
- How are faculty and staff trained to understand accessibility, inclusion, and belonging?
- What resources, policies, or practices exist to support the implementation of universal design for learning?
- How are accessibility practices designed in collaboration with students with lived experience of disability?
- For practical guidance, check out the **Learning Environments** Standard Support Tool.

## Early intervention (5.4.5)

- What upstream/preventative supports are available, such as mental health literacy training and life skills development (e.g., budgeting, cooking)? Where could these be strengthened?
- How are students supported to identify their own mental health and well-being needs early and encouraged to seek support?
- How are early intervention efforts designed to support equity-deserving students, including those who may face additional barriers to seeking help?
- What supports are in place to help staff, faculty, and students *recognize* early signs that a peer may be struggling with their mental health?
- What processes support staff and faculty to *respond* when they are concerned about a student's mental health?
- How are staff and faculty made aware of services, and how and where to *refer* students appropriately for support? Are referral pathways on campus clear?
- For practical training on the 3 R's (recognize, respond, refer), check out the **Mental Health First Aid training**.

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## Mental health supports (5.4.6)

- What are students' experiences navigating services on campus? How can pathways for support be made clearer?
- How are mental health services perceived by equity-deserving students and students facing barriers to access? What measures exist to increase inclusion and access to these services?
- How are mental health services made available to distance/online students and those studying on satellite campuses (if applicable)?
- In what ways are staff and faculty supported and/or resourced to provide support to a student in distress?
- Are there opportunities for internal, cross-departmental collaboration to enhance services?
- What partnerships exist with off-campus providers (e.g., hospitals, culturally specific services, community-based supports, Elders)? Where could these be strengthened?

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## Crisis management and postvention (5.4.7)

- How are students, staff, and faculty taught to notice signs of a mental health crisis and respond appropriately?
- In what ways are students, staff, and faculty made aware of crisis response protocols?
- In what ways do crisis response protocols reflect evidence-based best practices?
- How are crisis responses coordinated between internal and external responders (e.g., campus security, first responders, community partners)?
- What supports or resources are available to students, staff, and faculty immediately after a crisis or critical event?
- How are equity and inclusion considered in the supports provided during and after a crisis or critical event?
- What opportunities are provided for debrief following a crisis?
- For practical guidance on crisis management and postvention, check out the **Crisis Management Standard Support Tool**.



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## Tracking your progress (5.5)

- What key indicators are you currently tracking to understand what's working and what areas still need improvement?
- What processes are in place to document progress and identify gaps and opportunities?
- Are quantitative and qualitative methods being used to capture a fulsome picture of impact?
- How are findings reported back to leadership, staff, and students?
- What role does reporting play in prompting next steps or decisions?
- How are successes and progress celebrated?
- For practical guidance, check out the **Data Gathering and Evaluation** Standard Support Tool.

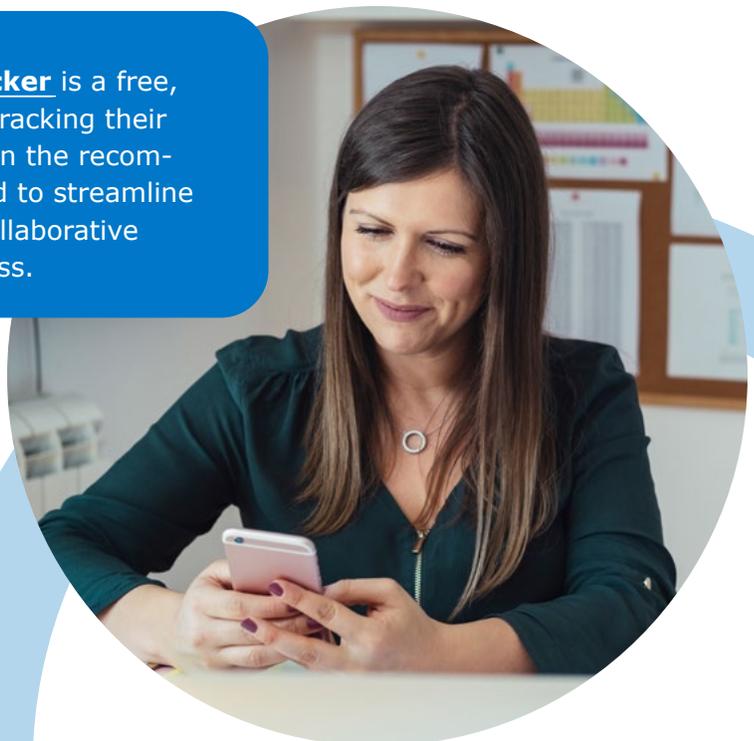
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## Continuous improvement (6.1)

- How do you regularly assess whether supports are timely, effective, and responsive to students' changing needs?
- What processes are in place to gather ongoing feedback from students, staff, and faculty?
- How is feedback used to continuously improve supports, policies, and practices?
- What processes are in place to review and update policies, practices, and/or services when gaps or new opportunities arise?
- Once you identify gaps or areas of improvement, what steps are taken to make changes?
- Are there opportunities to learn from other institutions through communities of practice or networks to support your journey with the Standard?

### Campus Mental Health Action Tracker

The **Campus Mental Health Action Tracker** is a free, bilingual resource to assist institutions in tracking their progress with the Standard. It breaks down the recommendations and guidelines of the Standard to streamline the self-evaluation process and support collaborative assessment of priorities, gaps, and progress.



# Reflections



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Learn more about the Mental Health  
Commission of Canada's work with  
the Post-Secondary Standard:  
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*Thank you to our partners in post-secondary  
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