



The Church of Scotland

Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Student Policy

Mental Health and Wellbeing

1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of The Church of Scotland ("Faith Nurture Forum") is committed to taking positive steps to eliminate discrimination in its policies, practices and procedures by creating an inclusive environment for students, promoting mental wellbeing and supporting those who experience mental health difficulties. These difficulties may be a long term mental illness, short term mental ill health, or an emerging mental health problem, that impact on a student's ability to study.

Faith Nurture Forum aims to create an environment where students feel at ease to disclose past or current mental health difficulties should they wish to do that. The Church of Scotland and its Faith Nurture Forum respect an individual's rights to privacy and will treat all information concerning an individual's mental health with confidentiality, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). This policy has been prepared in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

2. Purpose & Scope

This policy applies to all current and prospective students. The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for Faith Nurture Forum staff working with students experiencing mental health difficulties, and to provide guidance and support for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

The aims of this policy are to provide:

- A clear, transparent and practical policy framework relating to wellbeing and mental health issues for students and Faith Nurture Forum staff supporting IME students.
- A consistent approach by Faith Nurture Forum to the way we respond to the needs of students experiencing mental health difficulties.

3. Terminology

The Equality Act (2010), defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a "substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". Faith Nurture Forum recognises the benefits of a holistic approach to wellbeing and mental health.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Faith Nurture Forum Staff

Staff are expected to offer support to students within the professional limitation of their role. Staff are required to maintain an up to date knowledge about appropriate support, services and procedures for students experiencing mental health difficulties, basic guidance on identifying warning signs to look out for in order to signpost the student to the most appropriate service and support networks.

Faith Nurture Forum will ensure that all those who provide a service to or support students are trained on this policy.

4.2 Students

Students are responsible for communicating their needs to enable Faith Nurture Forum to offer the most appropriate support.

Students are encouraged to take care of their own wellbeing and mental health, for example ensuring that they get adequate rest, maintain a balance between their home-life and studies, take prescribed medication (if applicable) and access appropriate support. Faith Nurture Forum staff can direct students to further sources of support if the need arises.

4.3 Other Students

Students concerned about a fellow student's mental health or wellbeing should be aware of their personal limitations and should encourage their fellow student to seek specialist support at the earliest opportunity. If this is difficult then advice should be sought from the Faith Nurture Forum Pastoral Support Team.

5. Admissions and Entry

Faith Nurture Forum welcomes enquiries and applications from all prospective students including those who have, or have a history of, mental health difficulties. All applicants will be assessed initially through the discernment process and Faith Nurture Forum will consider implementing any reasonable adjustments to prevent discrimination on the grounds of mental wellbeing.

At application, prospective students living with mental health difficulties are encouraged to disclose this information. Students will be given specific advice about the support available to them throughout their studies. Any information disclosed will be kept confidential and only communicated to other relevant parties with the student's written consent in line with General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Mental Health problems should not be a barrier to full participation in the IME programme. All necessary adjustments, where reasonable, will be made to enable students living with mental health difficulties to access all aspects of the programme and to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage compared to other students.

6. Support

If a student is experiencing mental health difficulties during the course of the IME programme various sources of advice, support and signposting to external agencies are available from Faith Nurture Forum Training Officers.

7. Mitigating Circumstances

If a student is unable to complete aspects of the IME programme or feels that their performance in a piece of work has been adversely affected by a fluctuating or deterioration in their mental health, they are entitled to submit an application concerning mitigating circumstances. This will be considered by Faith Nurture Forum. Faith Nurture Forum reserves the right at any point to request an Occupational Health Assessment.

8. Interruption of Studies

Faith Nurture Forum will respond flexibly to any request to suspend studies on the grounds of mental ill health to enable a period of rest and recovery. An appropriate period of recovery can be agreed, after which the Faith Nurture Forum reserves the right to require medical evidence to confirm that the student is fit and able to cope with the demands that will be placed upon them and reserves the right to request an Occupational Health Assessment.

Likewise, if a student's performance is being adversely affected by a mental health difficulty, Faith Nurture Forum may encourage the student to consider requesting some time out to recover. A student will not be disadvantaged on the resumption of his/her studies by reason of agreed suspension due to mental health difficulties.

Suspension of studies and participation in the IME programme can only be approved by Faith Nurture Forum. Decisions regarding the continuation of funding for studies will be approved by Education and Support Committee. The Faith Nurture Forum reserve the right to request an Occupational Health Report in order to support this process.

9. Monitoring and Review

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. The policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

Date First Published:	September 2018
Date of Last Review:	December 2020
Frequency of Review:	2 years
Approved by:	E&S Committee