



## **Embedding Mental Wellbeing: Methods and Benefits Collaborative Enhancement Project 2021**

### **'Are you OK?': A wellbeing conversation with students throughout the coronavirus pandemic**

#### **Executive Officers & Student Voice, De Montfort Students' Union**

Between October 2020 and January 2021, De Montfort Students' Union (DSU) began a conversation with its members with regards to the impact they had felt on both their wellbeing and academic experience, as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This was an Executive Officer led project, facilitated and made possible by the wider staff team at DSU and Course Representatives who promoted the initiative and energised participation within faculties and amongst their peers.

DSU worked in partnership with De Montfort University (DMU) teams - specifically #HealthyDMU and Wellbeing & Disability - to ensure that students were safeguarded in their responses, and that appropriate levels of signposting and service-linking were offered at each stage.

The project sought to facilitate conversations around students' uncertainty, isolation and logistical challenges at the intersections of wellbeing and academic experience, taking individuals on personal feedback journeys.

As a by-product, this has also situated the DSU Executive Officers and DSU team as a collective of proactive and helpful individuals to be points of contact to refer back to at a later date as needed beyond the pandemic.

The 'Are you OK?' question was asked through a series of surveys between October 2020 and January 2021, to monitor and gauge the wellbeing and feelings of students at that stage within the pandemic.

The surveys asked questions around wellbeing, blended learning and communication to and from both DMU and DSU. As part of this, 'are you OK?' was asked openly, and invited a range of free text responses that resulted in a variety of feedback and troubleshooting opportunities.

As part of the surveys, consent was sought to gain permission to contact students individually, which resulted in 400+ individual conversations between staff and students as a direct result of the survey. Staff supported in triaging a wide range of queries relating to Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), timetabling, Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and loneliness that students had been unable to resolve personally and required further support with.

The success was measured in the impact felt to over 400 individuals who had received direct support with their worries, by their subsequent re-engagement with us at later dates (having established the DSU as a safe space to voice concern and seek practical help), and by the

broader student population who opted to not participate but knew the offer of a conversation was there, should they need it.

Ultimately, the project was a success by creating and holding space for students to talk, providing an inlet for feedback and challenging conversations. The initiative set a precedent and culture for taking students on individual feedback journeys, honouring and considering individual student voices, as opposed to homogenising the 27,000 student voices at DMU. We are proud to have engaged in a plurality of conversations as opposed to a singular response.

This document was produced as part of the [Collaborative Enhancement Project - Embedding Mental Wellbeing](#).