

Union School of Theology

Pastoral Care & Wellbeing Framework:

Principles & Practice

Review date: April 2024

Introduction

Part of our purpose at UST is to train people for pastoral care in ministry settings. While they are studying as part of the UST family, we have a responsibility to care for them. This reflects our core values.

- **Delighting in God**
- **Growing in Christ**
- **Serving the church**
- **Blessing the world**

At the time of writing (March 2022) we are still experiencing the challenges resulting from Covid 19. Despite this, the school has grown in student numbers, particularly on our flexible and distributed programmes. Pastoral care has continued during this time with several roles developing and changing. This includes the learning community mentors, personal tutors, tutor for women, wellbeing tutor and pastoral dean.

As part of continuous development, part one of this framework will outline core principles for pastoral care and wellbeing. These will be reviewed by the QAC every 2 years. Part two of the framework outlines practice which will be implemented and developed on an ongoing basis.

Pastoral care will be managed on an ongoing basis by the Provost and Pastoral Dean.

Part One. Core Principles

1. Our vision is for UST to be a community of communities¹ which promotes pastoral care and wellbeing, enabling students and staff to thrive and succeed to their best potential in theological study and in personal and spiritual formation.
2. The wellbeing of the individual and the wellbeing of the UST community are intricately connected. We seek for each individual to be growing in Christ-likeness and to be loving those in the UST community with a Christ-like love.
3. Spiritual and personal wellbeing is promoted as we implement best practice across the school including practical, academic and personal support.
4. Excellent communication is vital for the prevention of avoidable stress and for identifying and addressing wellbeing issues.
5. Everyone at UST will seek to encourage and support one another, as they have opportunity, within the community of communities.
6. Each student at UST will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. This includes understanding where appropriate support may be accessed.
7. Pastoral care will be responsive to individuals' characteristics, academic abilities, backgrounds and experiences. This includes students studying from overseas where different cultural norms, legal and regulatory factors may apply.
8. Pastoral care will be pro-active, anticipating needs and concerns; and responsive when needs and circumstances arise.
9. The roles and responsibilities of key staff will be clearly defined and communicated to students so that any individual will always know the people they can approach for help and advice. (See table below)
10. Pastoral care interacts with other policies and practices across the school. This document should be implemented in compliance with statutory and other policies. For example, Safeguarding, Prevent and Data Protection Policies.
11. Pastoral care in a local church is a key element of spiritual and ministry formation. All students are encouraged to engage actively in fellowship and serve in their local churches. If studying on campus, students are encouraged to keep in close contact with their home churches and to integrate with local churches if studying on campus. UST may contact a student's church to co-ordinate pastoral care when needed.

¹ Campus community, learning communities, programme and module communities

Part Two. Practice and Implementation

Concepts:

- **Community of Communities**
- **Culture of Mutual Care**
- **Communication**
- **Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities**

Provision of pastoral care will be made available for every student studying with UST, aiming for an equivalence of experience, even though specific details will vary. The flexible and distributed nature of our suite of courses offers distinct advantages and challenges for pastoral care and wellbeing. For example,

- Most of our students choose to study at a distance from campus. Support structures are already established, and basic needs are provided for (e.g., housing and services such as GPs or schools for children). Relationships with family, friends and home church offer important support and care. There is, however, less personal contact with module lecturers and fewer opportunities for informal interactions where concerns can be observed or discussed. Excellent communication is vital to mitigate these challenges.
- For students on the BA and MTh who relocate to campus for their studies, established support structures may change and new ones are needed. UST will help to facilitate such transitions so that the campus-based experience will help students to thrive.

Some of this provision is common across the programmes. For example, each student will be supported by their academic lecturers, the administration team and the pastoral care team. Female students are also supported by a dedicated female member of the

pastoral care team. Some of this will vary according to specific programmes. For example,

- **BA Campus:** Student induction will include advice and information on practical matters such as housing, health and local churches. Students will be encouraged to take an active role in building the student community with student run events, enhancing mutual support and collaboration.
- **BA Flex:** Students on this programme will be encouraged to engage with others studying the same modules including campus-based students. As part of their campus attendance requirement, they will have the opportunity to speak with lecturers and staff.
- **GDip.** Students will be encouraged to exercise mutual support and care within their learning communities and within their modules. Lead mentors play a key role in supporting students and alerting campus staff to any issues, be they academic, practical or pastoral. Seminars will be run by module tutors once per semester. A programme wide meeting with the Pastoral Dean or another member of campus faculty will be arranged once per semester.
- **MTh Campus Full Time:** Student induction will include advice and information on practical matters such as housing, health and churches. Students will be encouraged to take an active role in building the student community and within their modules enhancing mutual support and collaboration. A programme wide meeting with the Pastoral Dean or another member of campus faculty will be arranged once per semester.
- **MTh Campus Part Time:** Students will be encouraged to take an active role in building student community within their modules. As part of their campus attendance requirement, they will have the opportunity to speak with lecturers and staff. A programme wide meeting with the Pastoral Dean or another member of campus faculty will be arranged once per semester.

- **MTh Learning Community:** Students will be encouraged to exercise mutual support and care within their learning communities. Lead mentors play a key role in supporting students and alerting campus staff to any issues, be they academic, practical or pastoral. A programme wide meeting with the Pastoral Dean or another member of campus faculty will be arranged once per semester.
- **PhD.** Students will have ongoing contact with their supervisors and will be invited to Research events for mutual support and encouragement.

People

- The President and Provost have executive oversight of pastoral care at UST. Management and implementation is delegated to The Provost and The Pastoral Care Team
- The Pastoral Care Team consists of (April 22):
 - The Pastoral Dean is responsible for the ongoing management of pastoral care at UST and may be contacted by students on any matter of pastoral concern.
 - The Wellbeing Tutor, provides support in relation to any matters of welfare, including mental health.
 - Personal Tutors are assigned to each student. They may be contacted by students for academic, pastoral and general advice.
 - Tutor(s) for women provide academic support and pastoral care for female students.
 - Staff are expected to exercise their roles keeping the principles of pastoral care and wellbeing in mind.
 - Students are expected to support the wellbeing of their fellow students as appropriate to their programme of study.
 - Staff have a duty to preserve the confidentiality of student material disclosed in a group or in one-2-one meetings. This should be in accord with other relevant policies, e.g., Data Protection, Safeguarding, & Prevent.

Processes

Caring for students is a core principle of every aspect of the work done at UST. Pursuing excellence and communicating clearly will contribute to the wellbeing of the whole student body. Processes should reflect this. For example,

- **Applications:** Students will be given clear guidance to ensure that they are on the most appropriate programme. Studying at the wrong level may lead to significant stress and potential failure.
- **Enrolment:** Students will be guided through the processes of enrolment so that they are studying the right module at the right time. For example, part time students should understand which modules to enrol for at each level of study. GDip and MTh students should understand what is available in their learning communities.
- **Induction:** Students will be given a clear induction to their programmes of study, including study skills and technical matters such as the use of Turnitin.
- **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Lecturers will use appropriate teaching methods and give clear instructions to enable students to succeed academically, to thrive spiritually and to develop character and personal wellbeing.
- **Assessment:** Exams, essays and other assignments are times of stress. Students will be encouraged to prepare thoroughly and to communicate issues and difficulties as they arise in order to mitigate this stress.
- **Student Feedback.** Students will be asked to give feedback on their experience of pastoral care while studying at UST.
- **Life after UST.** Students will have the opportunity to discuss next steps following graduation including further studies and ministry opportunities. There is the opportunity to continue their association with the Union family through the reformations fellowship.

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Where to find help, advice, support and information:

- Make sure that you are familiar with the cloud and the student handbook.
- If in doubt ask someone! If the person you first contact can't help, they probably know who can!

For module specific questions	“What did Luther mean by that?”	The module lecturer

	<p>“Which book is best for?” “I don’t know where to start on this essay ..help”</p>	
<p>For general questions about your studies or for pastoral concerns relating to your course.</p>	<p>“What elective should I do next year” “I am making the same sort of mistake every assignment. Can you help?”</p>	<p>Your personal tutor Programmes Officer</p>
<p>For matters of student wellbeing and pastoral concerns</p>	<p>“I am really struggling and need to talk to someone specifically” “I need to talk to someone about something very sensitive”</p>	<p>The Wellbeing Tutor The Pastoral Dean Your tutor for women or your personal tutor</p>
<p>Accessing digital resources, scanning and ILL requests, referencing</p>	<p>“I am having trouble access an article or ebook”, “I’d like a scanned section of book”, “I’m not sure how to put together a complex citation”.</p>	<p>Librarian</p>
<p>Applications, enrolment, exam scheduling and transcripts Prevent, Data Protection</p>	<p>“when will the exam timetable will be released?”</p>	<p>Programmes and Registry</p>
<p>For matters relating to your programme</p>	<p>“I need an extension”</p>	<p>The programme manager</p>

Document history	
April 2023	Change to tutor group reference

