



BNCA Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

1. Background

MKSSS's Dr. Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture for Women (BNCA) recognizes that mental health and emotional wellbeing are fundamental to academic success, creative thinking, and professional development, particularly in the context of contemporary architectural education. Architecture pedagogy involves intensive studio culture, continuous evaluation, extended screen time, and performance-based learning, which often result in stress, burnout, sleep deprivation, digital fatigue, and anxiety. These challenges are further intensified by post-pandemic stressors, financial uncertainty, climate anxiety, and the increasing mental health risks observed within creative and design-based professions, especially among young women.

In this context, BNCA acknowledges its responsibility to proactively address student wellbeing through structured institutional mechanisms. This Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy has been formulated by drawing cues from the **UMMEED Draft Guidelines of the Ministry of Education**, the **MANODARPAN initiative**, and the **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS)** of the Government of India. These national frameworks emphasize a preventive, promotive, and responsive approach to mental health in educational institutions, focusing on early identification of distress, accessible counselling services, coordinated institutional action, and postvention strategies.

Aligned with IQAC recommendations, updated UGC mandates, and Supreme Court directives, the policy adopts a student-centric, inclusive, and gender-responsive approach suited to the academic and emotional demands of architectural education. It integrates awareness creation, mentoring, counselling, crisis response, referral systems, and digital wellbeing measures within BNCA's existing institutional framework. Special emphasis is placed on women's mental health, emotional resilience, help-seeking behaviour, stigma reduction, and ethical handling of sensitive concerns, consistent with BNCA's mission as a women's institution.

2. Vision, Mission, Objectives and Scope

Vision:

To create a compassionate, inclusive, and emotionally safe academic environment where every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to seek help without fear or stigma.

Mission:

To promote holistic wellbeing through awareness, mentoring, counselling, and institutional mechanisms that nurture emotional resilience, mental health literacy, and balanced personal and academic growth.

Objectives:

- To enhance awareness of mental health, including post-pandemic anxiety, depression (affecting 33-46% of architecture students), burnout, and digital wellbeing among students and staff.
- To establish AI-supported systems for early identification of distress via apps, peer networks, and faculty training.
- To provide accessible on-campus counselling, telehealth referrals, and 24/7 crisis hotlines compliant with UGC 2025 norms.
- To prevent self-harm, suicide (elevated in architecture at 21.9/100,000), and burnout through workload audits and studio access limits.
- To ensure ethical, confidential handling with data protection for tele-sessions and sensitive concerns.
- To strengthen coordination among support cells, integrating climate resilience and financial stress workshops.

Scope:

This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate students, faculty members, non-teaching staff, administrators, and hostel residents of BNCA.

3. Guiding Principles

- **Student wellbeing is a shared responsibility of the institution.**- Student wellbeing is a collective responsibility involving faculty members, administrators, mentors, support staff, and student representatives. A coordinated institutional approach ensures timely identification of concerns and effective support for students.
- **Prevention and early support are as critical as crisis response.**- The institution emphasizes proactive measures such as awareness programs, mentoring, and early identification of distress to prevent escalation. Early support helps reduce emotional strain and minimizes the need for crisis intervention.

- **Confidentiality, empathy, and respect are fundamental.**- All mental health-related interactions are handled with sensitivity, empathy, and respect for individual dignity. Student information is treated as confidential and shared only when necessary to ensure safety and appropriate support.
- **Equal access to support irrespective of background, ability, or socio-economic status.**- The institution ensures that mental health and wellbeing services are accessible to all students without discrimination. Support systems are designed to be inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the student community.

4. Institutional Framework for Student Wellbeing

BNCA has established a robust framework of student support systems that collectively contribute to mental health and wellbeing. These include the Students' Welfare Officer, Student Council, Mentor-Mentee System, Grievance Cell, Anti-Ragging Cell, Anti-Sexual Harassment Cell, Equal Opportunity Cell, and Divyang Cell.

These bodies function collaboratively to ensure a safe campus environment, timely grievance redressal, inclusive practices, and emotional support for students.

5. Mental Health and Wellbeing Cell

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Cell (MHW Cell) functions as the nodal body for planning, implementing, and monitoring all mental health initiatives at BNCA. Operating under the guidance of the Principal and in coordination with the Students' Welfare Officer, the Cell ensures structured support, counselling access, referral mechanisms, documentation, and reporting to IQAC while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Mental Health and wellness Cell Composition:

| SR NO | NAME | DESIGNATION | ROLE |
|-------|---|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Dr Anurag Kashyap | Principal | Chairperson |
| 2 | Dr Sharvey Dhongde | Vice - Principal | Vice Chairman |
| 3 | Dr Meera Shirolkar | Professor | Nodal Officer |
| 4 | Yash Joshi | Students Welfare Officer | Coordinator |
| 5 | Shreya Karlekar | Counselor/Psychologist | Member Secretary |
| 6 | Dr Shruti Joshi | Senior Faculty | Member |
| 7 | Sayali Andhare/ Sourabh Marathe/ Amruta Barve/ Surabhi Gadakari | UG representative faculty | Member |
| 8 | Dr Swati Sahasrabudhe | M Arch LA representative faculty | Member |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------|--|--------|
| 9 | Dr Sujata Karve | M Arch EA representative faculty | Member |
| 10 | Dhanashree Sardeshpande | M Arch DA representative faculty | Member |
| 11 | Manjusha Daundkar | Baya Karve Hostel Incharge, MKSSS hostel | Member |
| 12 | Shilpa Pathak | AAO | Member |

Functions:

- Planning and implementation of annual wellbeing activities.
- Coordination of mentoring and counselling services.
- Referral to professional mental health services when required.
- Documentation and reporting to IQAC while ensuring confidentiality.

6. Preventive and Promotive Measures

BNCA adopts a preventive approach to mental wellbeing through structured academic and co-curricular initiatives. Orientation programs introduce students to all support systems at the beginning of the academic year. The mentor–mentee system ensures continuous academic and emotional guidance.

Preventive strategies include:

- Workshops on stress management, time management, and emotional resilience.
- Skill development and life-skills training.
- Inclusive and flexible academic practices during genuine distress.
- Promotion of healthy studio culture and collaborative learning.

7. Identification of Students in Distress

Faculty mentors, peers, and staff are sensitized to identify early signs of emotional or psychological distress. These may include academic decline, withdrawal, behavioural changes, excessive stress, or expressions of self-harm. Early identification allows timely intervention and referral to appropriate support services.

8. Crisis Response and Referral Protocol

In cases of moderate to severe distress, immediate emotional support and psychological first aid shall be provided. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Cell will be informed, and parents or guardians shall be contacted where necessary. Referral to qualified mental health professionals or emergency services will be made following established procedures.

9. Postvention and Ongoing Support

In the event of a critical incident, BNCA shall ensure sensitive communication, counselling support for affected students, monitoring of vulnerable individuals, and institutional review to prevent recurrence.

10. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All information related to student mental health shall be treated as strictly confidential. Records shall be securely maintained and accessed only by authorized personnel, except in situations involving immediate risk to life.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The effectiveness of this policy shall be reviewed annually by the IQAC based on utilization of services, feedback, incident analysis, and program outcomes. The policy shall be reviewed every two years or as required by regulatory bodies.

12. Conclusion

BNCA reaffirms its commitment to fostering a safe, empathetic, and empowering campus environment. This Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy provides a structured, ethical, and sustainable framework to support student wellbeing, align with national guidelines, and uphold the institution's responsibility toward holistic education.

BNCA- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

**Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha's
Dr. Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture for Women (BNCA)
Karve Nagar, Pune**

Prepared in alignment with IQAC committee guidelines, UGC Guidelines, and National Mental Health Frameworks

Approved by: HOD/IQAC / College Development Committee

| Date of Approval | Date of Implementation | Policy Review Cycle |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 27.12.2025 | 01.01.2026 | Every Two years |

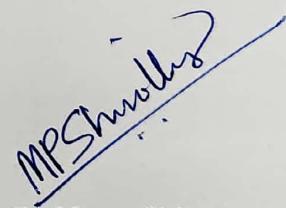
Authority:



Dr Anurag Kashyap
Principal
BNCA



Dr Sharvey Dhongde
Vice – Principal
BNCA



Dr Meera Shirolkar
Professor
Nodal Officer - MHWC

