

Well-being Strategy

Draft for Review

DRAFT

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Land Acknowledgement

York University recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

Acknowledgements

York would like to thank the many staff, students, faculty, instructors and partners who dedicated their time, experience and wisdom over many years to shaping the future of well-being at York. These significant contributions by community members have paved the way for a strong foundation that York is excited to build upon for current and future generations.

The Well-being Strategy aligns with other strategies at York and recognizes that a community approach is needed to address factors that impact well-being. The Strategy aims to bring together the community to work collaboratively and integrate resources across York's campuses.

Related York Strategies and Frameworks:

- University Academic Plan
 - Living Well Together
 - York's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Anti-Black Racism: A Framework on Black Inclusion
- The Indigenous Framework for York University: A Guide to Action
- York University Sustainability Strategy
- York University Strategic Research Plan
- Engaging the World: York University's Internationalization and Global Engagement Strategy
- Division of Students Strategic Plan
- One HR Strategic Plan

Evolution of Well-being at York

In 2012, a Mental Health Action Group at York University worked to create the foundation of York's commitment to mental health through the development of a Mental Health Steering Committee. This Committee led various initiatives to enhance existing institutional policies and procedures and undertook extensive consultation with the York community to better understand emerging needs.

The resulting Mental Health Strategy for York University was released in 2015 to begin setting the direction for addressing mental health concerns on campus. Through the work of that group a broader conversation arose about the meaning and use of the term well-being. At the time, it was agreed that the term well-being had a much broader context than mental health alone and through a research informed approach a new direction towards well-being was formed.

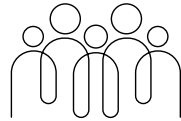
With a need to explore and define well-being at York, a Well-being Working Group was formed in 2018 to prepare York University to become a signatory to the Okanagan Charter. The group considered research, various well-being models and other institutional approaches. The group conducted community consultations and two summits over the course of a year. As a result, a new narrative began to inform moving towards a well-being framework.

In 2020, the focus shifted to supporting the sudden and pressing need for a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the community's well-being.

The work was then reignited in 2021 when three Well-being Co-chairs put forth a proposal to shift from the existing Mental Health Strategy to a Well-being Strategy. This shift was informed and guided by the rich history of work, dedication of past groups and the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) Standards. The Well-being Strategy Co-chairs gathered the past members of the Mental Health Steering Committee, Well-being Working Group, along with various partners across York's campuses to affirm a common knowledge about past work, gather information about current work and consult on the creation of a path forward toward a Well-being Strategy surrounding the priority action of Living Well Together as part of the University Academic Plan.

In 2022, York launched the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS) for students, developed a Well-being Executive Committee and led numerous community consultations to understand current well-being needs to inform the development of this pan-university Well-being Strategy.

EVOLUTION OF WELL-BEING AT YORK UNIVERSITY



2012

- Mental Health Action group develops a Mental Health Steering Committee.
- Recognized a need for reviewing existing institutional policies and procedures and emerging needs.
- Conducted extensive consultations with students, staff, faculty and instructors.

2015

- Mental Health Strategy for York University was released.
- The research gathered throughout the Mental Health Strategy's development led to new insights about how York could expand its approach to well-being.

2018

- A Well-being Working Group was formed to prepare York to become a signatory to the Okanagan Charter.
- The Group conducted research, community consultations and two summit events.
- A new narrative regarding the well-being framework was formed.

2020

- York refocused efforts to supporting the broader community's well-being due to the pandemic.

2021

- Well-being Co-Chairs put forth a proposal to shift the existing Mental Health Strategy to a broader Well-being Strategy.
- This shift was guided by the work and dedication of past groups and the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) Standards.
- Consulted with various partners to create a path towards the development of a Well-being Strategy at York.

2022

- First launch of the Canadian Campus Well-being Survey (CCWS) for students.
- A Well-being Executive Committee was formed.
- Numerous community engagement sessions were held to understand current well-being needs.
- Themes were identified from the sessions that supported the development of the pan-university Well-being Strategy.

2023

- Hosted community engagement sessions for feedback on the draft of the Well-being Strategy.
- Coordinated a Well-being Week Campaign to be held in each term.

Guiding Documents & Treaties

Okanagan Charter

The Okanagan Charter (2015) is an international charter that guides post-secondary institutions across the world to build health promoting university and colleges. The Okanagan Charter calls upon post-secondary schools to embed health and well-being into all aspects of campus culture, operations and academic mandates and to lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally.

Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty

The Two Row Wampum (Gaswéñdah) treaty was established in 1613 between the Haudenosaunee and European Settlers (Onondaga Nation, 2023). This agreement remains a living treaty today for guiding the co-existence of Indigenous people and Settlers on Indigenous lands. The Two Row Wampum was mutually built upon three principles: friendship, peace and the creation of a forever lasting agreement. The Haudenosaunee created this beaded wampum to document the agreement which depicts two boats as the two purple stripes of beads navigating without ever interfering with the other on a white beaded river of life. The wampum respects the boundaries in the differences of the lives, laws and people of each culture and emphasizes the importance of respecting the right of self-determination of Indigenous people.



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals were set forth by the United Nations in 2015, as a path to improve the planet including human life by year 2030. These 17 goals are embedded into the work of York University through the commitment to lead as an agent of positive change. The 17 SDGs are as follows:

- No Poverty
- Zero Hunger
- Good Health and Well-being
- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Clean Water and Sanitation
- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Reduced Inequality
- Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action
- Life Below Water
- Life on Land
- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Partnerships to Achieve the Goal



Mental Health Commission of Canada: National Standard for Mental Health & Well-Being for Post Secondary Students

The National Standard for Mental-Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students is a set of flexible, voluntary guidelines to help post-secondary institutions support the mental-health and well-being of students through long-term planning (MHCC, 2020). Following a socioecological model, this standard provides various audit tools and assessments to help guide universities at identifying opportunities to enhance well-being on campus. It is grounded in continuous improvement to support post-secondary institutions with their efforts to meet key well-being and mental health outcomes.

Mental Health Commission of Canada: National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace is a flexible voluntary set of guidelines, tools, and resources to develop and sustain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace through a journey of continual improvement (MHCC, 2018). A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is one that actively prevents harm to staff, faculty and instructor psychological health and promotes psychological well-being. Although there are many factors external to the workplace that can impact psychological health and safety, the National Standard addresses 13 factors that are within the control, responsibility or influence of the workplace. The 13 factors are as follows:



Organizational Culture



Involvement & Influence



Psychological and Social Support



Workload Management



Clear Leadership & Expectations



Engagement



Civility & Respect



Balance



Psychological Demands



Psychological Protection



Growth & Development



Protection of Physical Safety



Recognition & Reward

Vision

York's Well-being Strategy is informed by the Anishinaabe teaching of Mino Bimaadiziwin that refers to the gift of the good life.

The teaching of Mino Bimaadiziwin was provided on behalf of Nookomis' Julie Ozawagosh from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (Whitefish Lake First Nation).

A good life is holistic, peaceful and balanced. It lacks contradiction and conflict with one's relatives, environment and ecosystem. Mino Bimaadiziwin can be achieved by living in accordance with the Seven Grandfathers Teachings – Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility and Truth.

This teaching inspires us to honour and learn from our individual pasts and to let go of pre-existing beliefs to grow in kindness and acceptance towards ourselves and others. Each day is a new opportunity for rebirth and renewal, to discover our relationship with ourselves, to uncover our passions, to give gratitude and to contribute to our families, to our community and to our land.

If I choose to lead Mino Bimaadiziwin, if I change myself, then I create a positive change in the world.

York is grateful to learn from this Indigenous teaching referred to in the University Academic Plan under the action area of Living Well Together.

York University's Well-being Strategy aims to promote a safe, healthy, inclusive and supportive environment that fosters well-being and opportunities for positive change among members of the York community. Well-being is a necessary pre-condition to working and learning. York is committed to taking a holistic pan-university approach to addressing well-being across all of York's campuses and elevating our commitment to the Okanagan Charter in leading as a health promoting institution. This work is guided by the MHCC Standards for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and Mental Health and Well-being for Post Secondary Students to create a Strategy that is aligned with and inclusive of the needs of the community.

While the Division of Equity, People and Culture and the Division of Students take a leadership role in advancing the Well-being Strategy, the success of this Strategy is dependent on the participation of the entire York community including students, staff, faculty and instructors. York calls upon faculties, divisions, departments, units and all York community members to identify the shared responsibility and implement actions to support well-being.

Dimensions of Well-being

York's definition of well-being consists of seven dimensions. A holistic approach to well-being is important and requires attention to one's needs and strengths within these dimensions. Well-being is a state that we work towards and must be approached and viewed from an individual, systemic, and community-based perspectives. These dimensions support a broad lens of well-being that is aimed towards the diversity of community members on York's campuses. The dimensions serve as a guide to the various meanings of individual well-being, Mino Bimaadiziwin and the wellness of the overall community. By highlighting these dimensions, York encourages the development of a wide variety of well-being initiatives that account for the diverse needs of community members across a broad spectrum. York recognizes that institutional systems are in place that may limit the ability for community members to achieve wellness. It is imperative that York identify and work towards dismantling barriers.



Physical Well-being: Maintaining a healthy quality of life that allows individuals to get the most out of their daily activities without undue fatigue, physical stress or impacts to physical safety while on York's campuses.



Mental Well-being: Managing one's own thoughts, feelings and reactions to the stress of learning and working to support responding to situations in healthier ways that promote resilience, growth and development.



Emotional Well-being: Coping with, expressing and managing one's own emotions in a way that enhances the ability to form healthy relationships, be self-compassionate, experience emotional growth, insight and experience happiness.



Social Well-being: Sharing, developing and sustaining meaningful relationships and to be involved and engaged with other community members.



Spiritual & Cultural Well-being: Experiencing and integrating meaning and purpose in life through connectedness with self, others, art, media, nature, faith or a power greater than oneself while on York's campuses.



Occupational Well-being: Achieving a balance between work and leisure in a way that promotes health, personal satisfaction, growth and development.



Financial Well-being: Managing to comfortably meet one's current financial commitments and basic needs while also having the tools to continue doing so in the future.

Guiding Principles

York's well-being guiding principles are at the core of the university's drive to establish goals that enhance well-being on its campuses. These principles act as a guide when identifying strategic priorities, areas of focus and subsequent recommendations set forth in this strategy to centre on what is most important to community members.

- **Accessibility:** Access to usable and meaningful well-being information, activities and environments is a right for all York community members.
- **Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (DEDI):** Creating a culture of well-being is intended to provide all community members with equitable and just opportunities to flourish and thrive. Well-being is an equity issue and solutions for historically underserved and underrepresented community members benefit everyone.
- **Innovation:** Innovation means doing work both old and new in creative ways. Through innovation the needs of community members can be met in ways that are current and have the most impact.
- **Collaboration:** Well-being initiatives are enhanced when developed and implemented through partnerships both within and outside of the university community.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Well-being is a shared responsibility in which all York community members play a role through individual self-efficacy and/or collective responsibility for systemic change to enhance the campus environment.

Well-being Strategic Priorities

York's Well-being Strategy priorities were developed through a community driven prioritization process via community engagement sessions hosted in 2022 and 2023. These priorities are reflected throughout the document in both collective and individual contexts for student, staff, faculty and instructors.

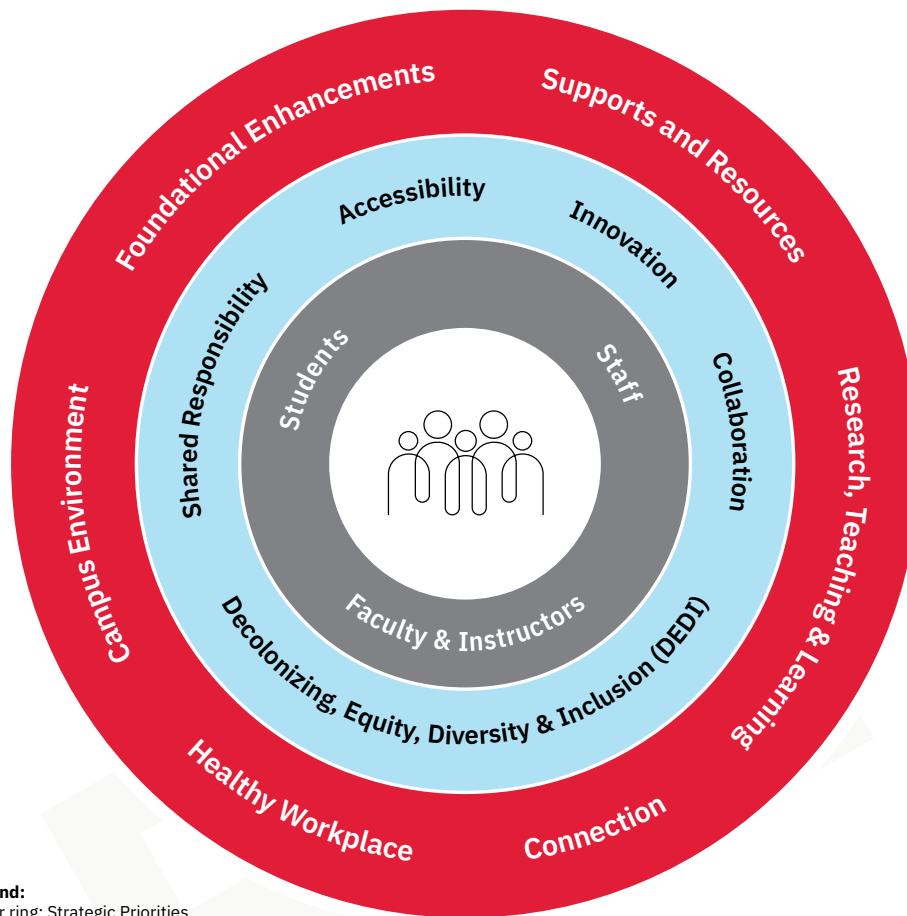
Through these community consultations and guidance from the MHCC Standards, six areas of priority were identified:

- **Foundational Enhancements**
- **Supports and Resources**
- **Research, Teaching and Learning**
- **Connection**
- **Healthy Workplace**
- **Campus Environment**

Within each priority, the Strategy highlights areas of focus (i.e., what should be done) and recommendations (i.e., how it can be achieved) over the next five years for faculties, divisions, departments and units to guide well-being work when enabling activities in alignment with the Well-being Strategy.

York recognizes that well-being work will evolve over time and that this strategy is not all encompassing and requires a sustained approach to meaningful change. Continued and ongoing community engagement is imperative in supporting the York community with what matters most.

WELL-BEING STRATEGY



Legend:
 Outer ring: Strategic Priorities
 Middle ring: Guiding Principles
 Centre ring: York Community

➤ Foundational Enhancements

Foundational Enhancements denote the strengthening of a framework that facilitates systemic changes to implementation, accountability and assessment of well-being actions within York. This Strategy is aligned with the addition of the University’s signature to the Okanagan charter, embracing the charter’s calls to action to embed well-being transversely in the university’s culture and leading health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally.

Areas of Focus

- Apply a well-being lens to campus governance, policies, practices, processes, and procedures.
- Integrate the well-being strategic priorities into Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) across the university.
- Increase awareness and application of the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s Standards for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and Mental Health and Well-being for Post-Secondary Students.
- Increase access to well-being grants and awards that support community innovation.

Recommendations

- Sign the Okanagan Charter as a commitment to the calls to action and launch of the Strategy.
- Develop a process to ensure that campus policies and processes are supportive of well-being.

- Support leaders to integrate well-being strategic directions as part of York's IRPs, strategic plans and program goals tailored to unique needs.
- Develop a robust evaluation and reporting strategy to measure the long-term impacts and sustainability of well-being initiatives laid out within the Strategy.
- Create working groups and partnerships to support the implementation of the Strategy and report outcomes at least annually.
- Provide consultation to Divisions and Faculties on implementation of guidelines and toolkits for the application of the MHCC Standards.
- Partner with Advancement to generate resource funds dedicated to well-being.

➤ Supports & Resources

This priority focuses on expanding awareness of and access to well-being supports, resources, tools and services that will help to protect, support and enrich the well-being of all community members. It encourages York to critically examine gaps in service to take a well-being centered approach to meeting the diverse needs of the York Community.

Areas of Focus

- Address challenges with equity in access to supports and resources available to York community members.
- Support equity deserving community members with relevant resources.
- Respect and uphold the right for Indigenous community members to have self-determination surrounding their well-being needs.
- Provide services that meet individual community members or groups where they are at: the right service, at the right place at the right time.
- Address the increased prevalence of mental health needs including risk of suicide.
- Improve navigation to supports and resources by enhancing communication, awareness and promotion.

Recommendations

- Consult and partner with campus programs to support the application of DEDI principles that impact well-being to address barriers to access for equity deserving community members.
- Align service delivery, access and referral pathways to key support services across York's campuses for students accessing counselling, accessibility services, advising and crisis response.
- Advocate for a stepped care approach to well-being service delivery, which ranges from the least resource intensive and self-driven preventative support to more intensive services if required by the individual.
- Provide supports and resources that meet the needs of community members for each of the dimensions of well-being.
- Promote and increase access to suicide prevention training available to York community members.
- Enhance York's centralized well-being website with campus communications partners to market and provide efficient and effective access to well-being information.

➤ Research, Teaching & Learning

Research, Teaching and Learning as priorities refer to the importance of integrating innovative, effective, and inclusive research, teaching and learning opportunities for students, staff, faculty and instructors including in the classroom and in professional development opportunities that enhance well-being. This direction also refers to strengthening pathways to support within, to and from the classroom to improve well-being.

Areas of Focus

- Integrate well-being principles into teaching, classrooms, research and supervision settings.
- Implement universal design learning principles into teaching and learning practices to enhance the well-being of all learners.
- Increase availability of training for students, staff, faculty and instructors to build personal resilience and wellness that promote academic and professional success.
- Expand learning, career, and professional development opportunities for employees.

Recommendations

- Promote teaching and learning practices that integrate inclusive curriculum and pedagogy that includes concepts of well-being.
- Partner with faculties and Teaching Commons in the development of well-being toolkits, course resources, lessons and practices to embed well-being into the campus learning environment.
- Partner with Research Commons to embed well-being into research settings and practices.
- Expand training and experiential learning opportunities for community members.

➤ Connection

Connection focuses on building opportunities for meaningful and healthy connections among York's diverse community both in person and in virtual settings. This includes building networks, support groups, sharing circles, partnerships and collaborations that enable community members to develop authentic connections and a sense of belonging and community. Opportunities for connection should take place virtually and in-person to ensure that all individuals are able to participate. York is committed to bringing people together from diverse cultures, backgrounds and experiences to foster awareness and empathy, learning and knowledge sharing. Individual wellness and community wellness are interconnected in this shared environment within which the university community works and learns.

Areas of Focus

- Create opportunities for forging relationships between community members from a global and intercultural perspective.
- Work towards repairing relations and decolonization by taking steps towards learning through Truth and Reconciliation (Commission of Canada, 2015) and the teachings from the Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty.
- Find innovative ways to address barriers to belongingness as commuter campuses.
- Foster partnerships, meaningful connections, experiential learning opportunities and collaboration across faculties and divisions.
- Drive conversations about well-being and reducing stigma across York's campuses.

Recommendations

- Increase engagement and participation of the York community through innovative programs, events, networks, experiences and various offerings to connect on and off campus.
- Work in alignment as Indigenous community members and Settlers to lead in establishing relationships rooted in peace, friendship and mutual respect.
- Promote and broadly communicate opportunities for social connectivity for community members.
- Increase community engagement, conversations and messaging about well-being on York's campuses.

➤ Healthy Workplace

Consistent with York's Healthy Workplace Policy, this strategic direction focuses on the development and maintenance of a psychologically healthy and safe working environment that prevents harm to employee psychological health and promotes psychological well-being. Through a process of continual improvement, York is committed to addressing workplace factors that are known to impact psychological health and safety, as outlined in the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety. This direction also applies to students' work and volunteer positions, placements, internships and co-ops etc. that are occurring as part of their involvement on York's campuses.

Areas of Focus

- Adopt the Standard for Psychological Health and Safety on York's campuses and continue building a culture that supports well-being.
- Align policies, procedures and practices with guidelines from the Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.
- Educate all employees, including leaders and encourage an active role in contributing to the ongoing development of a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.
- Increase student employment and work experience opportunities.

Recommendations

- Collaborate and consult with partners to develop resources, toolkits and training to support implementation of the Standard.
- Develop and implement initiatives focused on re-designing work environments to reduce burnout and enhance work-life balance.
- Expand training for employees including leaders to support the development of a psychologically healthy and safe work environment.
- Create a network of employee well-being ambassadors.
- Expand opportunities for employment, work experience, volunteering, career networking and planning for students.

➤ Campus Environment

Campus Environment emphasizes that York's campus environment is critical to student, employee, faculty and instructor well-being. Two areas of note are physical safety of the campus community and York's relationship to land. Physical safety refers to the York community being proactive and preventative in addressing physical risks and harms, which contribute to students and employees being safe and well while on York's campuses. Relationship to the land denotes that all community members are treaty people who play a collective role in strengthening the connections to Indigenous history and care for Indigenous lands that York's campuses were built upon.

Areas of Focus

- Enhance safety on York's campuses.
- Address housing and food security issues impacting community members.
- Enhance connections and care for the land that York's campuses occupy with respect and reciprocity as part of the Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty.
- Create a sustainable campus environment that is rich with well-being spaces.

Recommendations

- Support the implementation of the Security Service Review.
- Activate a food security working group to address impacts to community members on York's campuses.
- Work alongside campus services to support broader access to housing options for students.
- Increase uptake of climate change, habitat conservation, water and air protection initiatives.
- Work towards decolonizing campus environments by supporting the enhancement of visibility and creation of Indigenized spaces.
- Consult with key partners to ensure that design standards are in place when creating spaces to consider the impact of built, living, learning and working environments on well-being.

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