



Hochschulforum
Digitalisierung

**Step by step to a mental
health visibility
campaign at your
university**

**Recommendations for actions for lecturers,
students, university groups and
stakeholders in health management**

Tanja Brock, Jan Schuhr, Barbara Einig

*research project enhance - Mental health in the context of
digitalisation processes at universities*

Protestant University of Applied Sciences Dresden, Germany



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Introduction

Mental health has become increasingly important in recent years and **no longer seems to be a taboo subject**. Campaigns such as the global Mental Health Day or discussions on social media platforms under #mentalhealth show the relevance across generations and countries. However, open dialogue and engagement with the topic should not just be an individual task. Rather, **awareness must also be raised at an organisational level**.

Educational institutions, such as universities, are particularly challenged to **reach students in their different life situations and to create health-promoting conditions for their studies**.

The main concern is how **information** about the various counselling services, digital interventions, physical contact points and contact persons **can be communicated to students** and **made clearly visible** across the entire campus, including the university's web presence (university website and social media platforms). This is primarily a **strategic task for the university's leadership, (student) health management and public relations**.

The step-by-step guide to planning and implementing a mental health visibility campaign was developed as part of the [enhance](#) research and practice development project and published in cooperation with the [HFD think tank 'Wellbeing in the digital age at universities'](#) via the HFD.

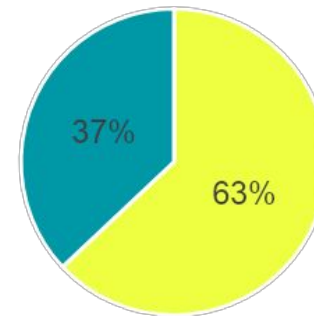
The relevance of visibility campaigns at universities

Empirical Impressions from the enhance-project

And secondly, I think it's nice that **mental health** is somehow getting **more attention in society as a whole** and is somehow being talked about more. And that's why I think it **also needs to take place at university** somehow.

... if you're feeling really down, then you **just want to get a handout** that says who I can contact. And you could easily accomplish that digitally.

Awareness of psychosocial counseling services (n= 5474)



■ yes ■ no/don't know

Guenther et al. (2023)

General Framework

A participatory project by students

The guide follows the concrete example of a visibility campaign that was implemented during the winter semester 2023/24 at the Evangelical University of Dresden. It emerged as a result of a Studium Generale event. The original aim was to better link student participation and mental health in current learning and educational contexts. Following a methodological approach to considerations regarding a utopian university design (“The Journey to the Best University in the World”), the focus of the discussion shifted to the topics of visibility, awareness, public engagement, and sensitisation.

Thus, the project to plan and implement a visibility campaign at the university emerged. The tasks of the course instructors included collecting and systematising ideas, establishing contacts with relevant university stakeholders, and managing the accounting of expenses through project funds.



(Image Source: www.pixabay.com)

General Framework

A participatory project by students

FACTS

- Studium Generale 'Mental Health Mitgedacht & Mitgemacht. A task by everyone for everyone.' in the Social Work programme (B.A./M.A.)
- 6 dates of 3 hours each in winter term 2023/24; hybrid
- Acquisition of credit points 2 CP
- 11 students and 2 course instructors in total
- Organisation and collaborative work via:
 - **Stud.IP** (questionnaires, wikis, document storage, meetings)
 - **canva** (design) and
 - **Miro** (brainstorming ideas)
 - Budget: 500 euros



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Alternative frameworks

SGM – Student Health Management

If Student Health Management (SGM) is already being implemented at the university or is in planning, these resources can also be used to conduct a visibility campaign. The first step of SGM is a **comprehensive analysis of the health situation of students**, e.g. via interviews, focus groups and surveys. This allows specific problems and needs of the students to be identified and target groups for certain interventions to be determined. This differentiation can be used to develop **topic-specific visibility campaigns** that address, for example, a degree programme or a particularly disadvantaged group. **Student participation** forms a core principle of SGM, as they, being experts of their own living environment, can best design the interventions and thus, function as multipliers of health-promoting universities.



[Vgl. ausführlicher zum SGM](#)



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Step 1: Analysis & stocktaking

Getting to know your own university

effective questions

What services are students aware of so far?

What support services and contacts persons are available for mental health topics?

What services are there on the subject of mental health for students?

How is this information organised? (website, notices on campus, multilingual)?



Are the results of surveys and studies on your own university already available?



Own research and analysis regarding the questions

Information Gap:

Students are not sufficiently informed about existing opportunities, resources, rights and advice centres. This information is not adequately publicised either on the web or on campus.



Step 2: Developing Formats

What solutions can be derived from the results of the analysis?

Information and knowledge transfer

Visible placement of existing resources, offers, contact points and contact persons; insight into current state of research on student mental health

Empowerment and Support

Motivating and positive approach to students and invitation to participate in the discourse on mental health; appreciative communication and honouring everyday academic performance

Raising awareness and destigmatisation

Removing the taboo on mental illness; destigmatising the use of help; raising awareness of mental health among all university stakeholders

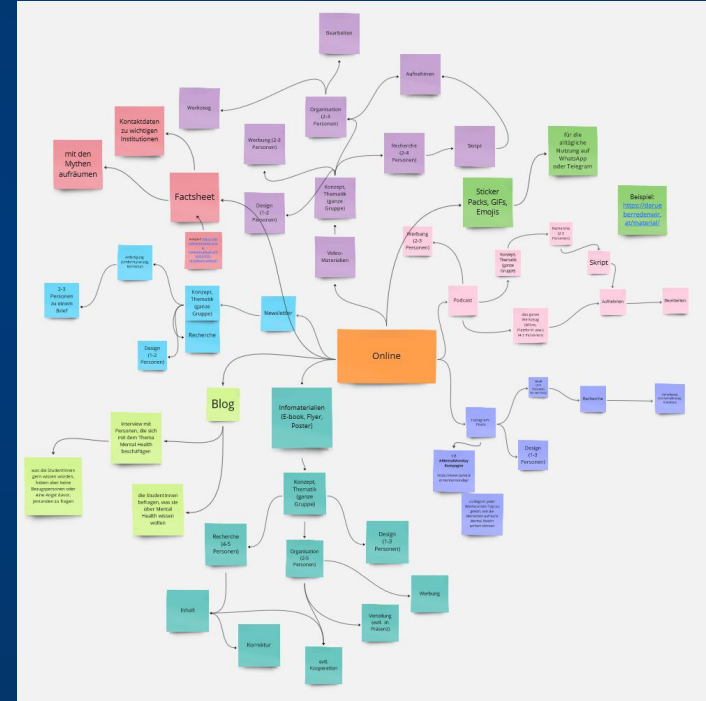
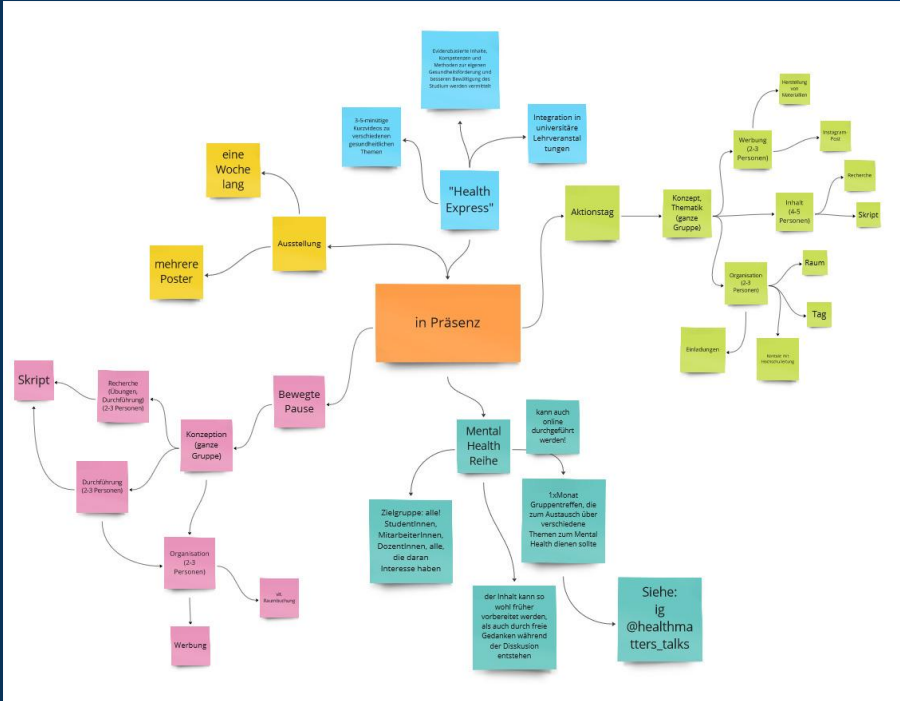


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Step 2: Developing Formats



Ausschnitt aus dem Miro Board über mögliche Formate

Step 2: Developing Formats

Collaborative working

The development of the formats focused on collaborative work. Specific formats, design and content were decided upon collectively. In the asynchronous work on these formats, digital tools such as Stud.IP (wiki, questionnaire tool for coordination) and Canva (design, mockups) were utilised.



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Step 2: Developing Formats



Format 1: Poster exhibition

A total of eleven A1 posters provide information about contacts and support services at the university and in the city, offering insight into the state of research on students' mental health. Additionally, three slogans were selected to raise awareness about mental health.

campaign title: How are you?
A campaign to raise awareness about mental health topics; by students of the ehs Dresden, Germany

Format 2: Motivating Postcards

Postcards with motivating slogans are to be distributed across campus. On the back, a QR code links to an overview of all available support services and contact points.

Format 3: Interactive self-praise machine

A prominently placed installation on campus invites people to pick up a dose of self-praise.

Step 2: Developing Formats

Format 1: Poster-Ausstellung

Insgesamt elf A1 Poster informieren über Ansprechpersonen und Anlaufstellen an der Hochschule und der Stadt und geben einen Einblick in die Studienlage zur psychischen Gesundheit Studierender. Außerdem wurden drei Sprüche ausgewählt, die für das Thema Mental Health sensibilisieren.

Format 2: Motivierende Postkarten

Postcards with motivating slogans are to be distributed throughout the campus. There is a QR code on the back that leads to an overview of all help and contact points.

Format 3: Interactive Self-praise machine

A visibly placed installation on the campus invites you to pick up a portion of self-praise.

Step 3: Preparation & Implementation

Preparation

Checklist Preparation

- ✓ Do we have a favourable date and space for setting up the campaign?
- ✓ Have we informed all key stakeholders?
- ✓ Is the campaign in line with the university's fire safety regulations?
- ✓ Have we established a realistic timeline and clarified responsibilities?
- ✓ For what duration have we planned the campaign?
- ✓ Should the campaign be implemented into sustainable structures?
- ✓ Preparation of material list
- ✓ Placing the print order

Step 3: Preparation & Implementation

Implementation

Checklist Implementation

- ✓ Have we allocated enough time for the setup?
- ✓ Has the facility management been informed and can they support us with the setup?
- ✓ Do we have the necessary tools on hand (e.g., ruler, scissors, hanging ropes, ladder, etc.)?



The construction as an event



The setup of the campaign should be visible and audible in line with its objectives. This way, conversations with curious students and university staff can be initiated.

The Campagne

Impressions (Poster Exhibition)

title: Obstacles for getting help

campaign title

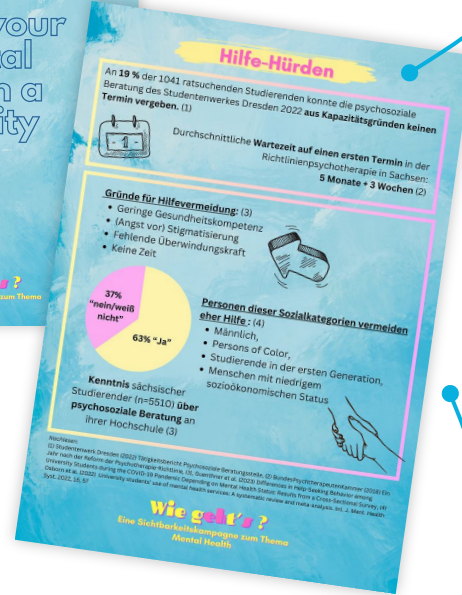


self description by the group organising the campaign

provided services (e.g. interactive machine for self-praise)

Make your mental health a priority

Wie geht's?
Eine Sichtbarkeitskampagne zum Thema Mental Health



examples of long waiting times for appointments

reasons and persons who are more likely to avoid help (e.g. identifying as male)



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The Campaign

Impressions (Poster Exhibition and Postcards)



Contact options for specific groups

"You can find support services here"

The Campagne

Impressions (interactive self-praise machine)



**Selbstlob-
maschine**

**Liebe Studierende,
Dozierende und
Angestellte,**

Sie leisten Großes!

**Hiermit sind Sie herzlich
eingeladen sich auch mal
selbst zu loben.**

Wie geht's?
Eine Sichtbarkeitskampagne zum Thema
Mental Health

self-praise machine

**"Dear Students,
Lecturers and staff.**

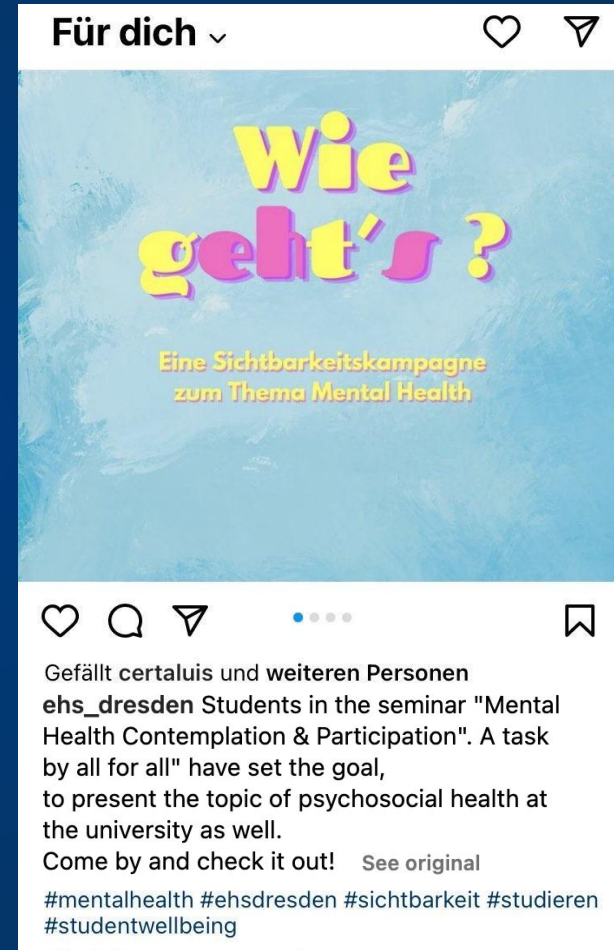
You achieve great work!

**You are warmly invited
to praise yourself!"**

Step 4: Advertisement

„What is this all about?“

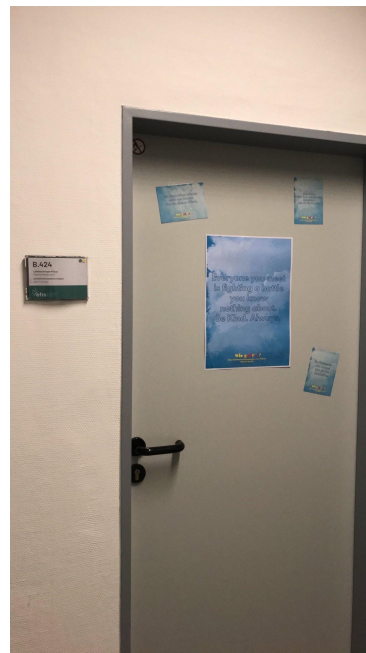
- Promotion via the university's student and faculty email distribution list.
- Advertisement via the university's own Instagram account (allow sufficient lead time so that the post can be included in the editorial plan in a timely manner).
- Distribute postcards on campus again at the beginning of the semester.



Step 5: Balance Sheet

Feedback – How was the campagne received?

- Postcards sold out quickly.
- Lots of positive feedback via emails from colleagues.
- Interactive self-praise machine gathered a group of curious people in front of it.
- Colleagues duplicated the posters to draw attention to contact persons and contact points on their office doors, for example.



Step 5: Summary

Learnings – What can be improved?

The special framework of the Studium Generale brought with it some limitations (especially limited time resources) that can be circumvented in long-term projects. We took away the following points from our experience:

- **Expansion of digital formats:** Stocktaking has shown, among other things, that the visibility of health services and key contacts, particularly online, can be improved. The website needs to be restructured with the aim of providing a better overview of the content of all services.
- **Inclusion:** The campaign should, of course, be accessible to all students. Therefore, overviews of support services and key contacts should be provided in multiple languages.
- **Sustainability:** Visibility should extend beyond the duration of the campaign. It is advisable to involve relevant university stakeholders (e.g., university leadership, health management) early on to consider a sustainable integration of the developed formats and their long-term development.

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About HFD

The German **Hochschulforum Digitalisierung** (German Forum for Higher Education in the Digital Age, abbreviated: HFD) not only **monitors, shares and acts as a source of information on important (inter)national developments in Higher Education**. Through a range of programmes and projects, it also builds **key competences of higher education professionals** across the country. Independent yet connected with a **network of stakeholders** from different sectors, including education and IT professionals, EdTech leaders, students, policy-makers and digital learning experts, it is uniquely placed at the **heart of the digital transformation of higher education in Germany**. The HFD was founded in 2014 as a **joint initiative** by the Stifterverband, CHE Centre for Higher Education and the German Rectors' Conference and is **funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research** (BMBF).



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Think Tank Well-Being and Mental Health at Universities in the Digital Age



Tina Basner

Contact

Thinktank Well-Being

tina.basner@che.de

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More information, publications and events online:

[www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/
wellbeing-digital/](http://www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/wellbeing-digital/)



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These recommendations for action were developed as part of the enhance research and practice development project (Mental Health in the context of digitalisation processes at universities). The project is funded by the Saxon State Ministry of Science, Culture and Tourism.

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Further information on the topic of ‘Wellbeing and mental health in the digital age at universities’ can be found on the HFD website: <https://hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/wellbeing-digital/>



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