

A Student-Centred Digital Tool for Enhancing Wellbeing and Reducing Academic Stress

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Background

- Many university students continue to experience stress and anxiety, with about four in ten reporting moderate to high levels (ONS, 2023). Academic pressure, financial worries and adjusting to independent living contribute to these difficulties (HEPI, 2020). Demand for mental-health support is high, often creating delays in accessing care (NHS Digital, 2023).
- These challenges can affect attendance, grades, concentration and relationships, and may lead to longer-term emotional difficulties if support is delayed (Student Minds, 2023).
- As traditional services struggle to meet demand, students increasingly use digital mental-health tools because they are easy to access, private and available at any time (NICE, 2021).
- UniBalance was developed to support emotional wellbeing through mood-tracking, CBT-style activities and crisis-signposting features (Lucas and Pollard, 2021).



Health Promotion Principles

Empowerment Students can actively monitor and understand their emotions through daily logs and personalised guidance (WHO, 2022).	Participation Discussion spaces and co-design help ensure students influence the tool’s development (Universities UK, 2022).	Equity The app reduces access barriers through low data requirements and multilingual support (Office for Students, 2022).
Supportive Environments UniBalance offers a secure digital environment for expression and emergency guidance (Bhui, 2020).	Health Promotion Values Its design is centred on accessibility, dignity, transparency and inclusivity (HEPI, 2020).	

Behaviour Change Theory – COM-B Model

The COM-B model explains behaviour change through Capability, Opportunity and Motivation (Michie, van Stralen and West, 2011).

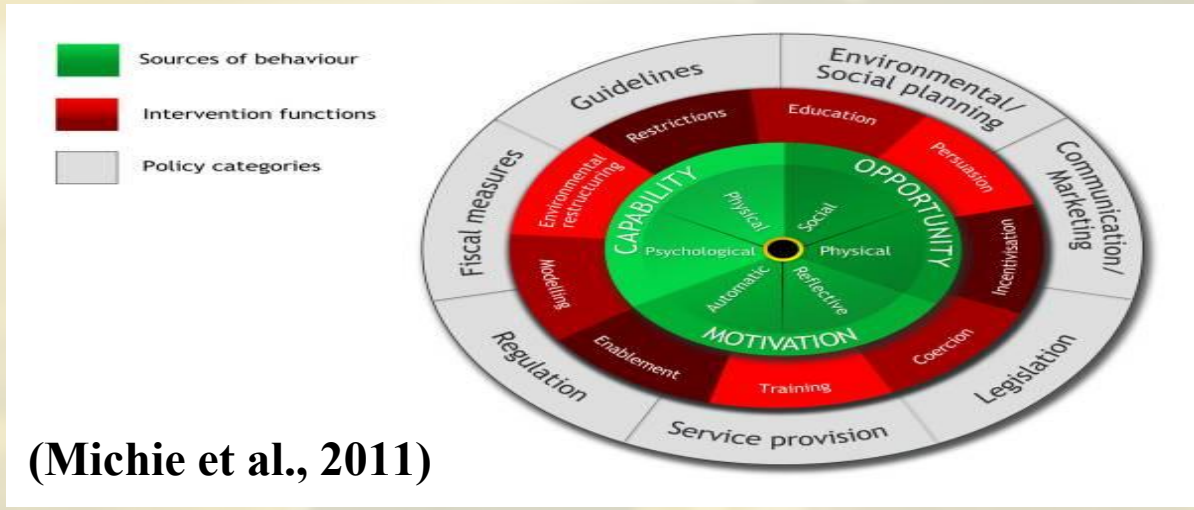
Why COM-B Works for UniBalance: The model supports long-term, meaningful behaviour change by aligning with daily student life and promoting healthy routines that reduce stress over time (Michie, van Stralen and West, 2011).



Expected Outcomes

Better Emotional Regulation

CBT techniques, breathing activities and reflection tools help students respond calmly and effectively to stress (Bhui, 2020).



(Michie et al., 2011)

Conclusion

- In conclusion, universities should integrate digital wellbeing tools into their mental-health strategies (NICE, 2021), and improving access to Wi-Fi, devices and digital resources is essential to support equitable student wellbeing (Office for Students, 2022). Furthermore, embedding wellbeing within academic programmes, inductions and study-skills sessions can help normalise mental-health support and encourage early help-seeking among students (HEPI, 2020). Finally, further evaluation is needed to understand long-term usage, accuracy, cultural suitability and the impact of digital wellbeing tools on academic success, especially considering ongoing digital-access challenges (Bhui, 2020; Student Minds, 2023).

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