



Building Synergy in Promoting Mental Health Awareness across Campus

University of British Columbia

Mental Health Needs Assessment team
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What is MHAC?

ubcmhac.sites.olt.ubc.ca



The **Mental Health Awareness Club (MHAC)** was established in 2010 to enhance mental health promotion and awareness in the UBC campus community. Offering a unique approach to learning and community service by applying classroom learning to action, MHAC is a student-led club that is mentored by an advisory board consisting of community partners and UBC staff and faculty members; thus, promoting interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration.



The focus of the club includes increasing student capacity by building knowledge and skills for mental health and fostering positive attitudes toward mental illness; thereby, increasing greater community capacity as these students join in promoting mental health awareness on campus. Over the past years, the club has fostered student learning and peer mentoring while providing a unique opportunity for students to learn about mental health.

Mental Health Needs Assessment

PHASE

1

Campus Stress

- To better understand the **undergraduate student perspective of stress and its implications on mental health** while attending UBC
- Used participatory action research (PAR) as a methodological framework
- Under PAR, the student co-researchers provided expertise and knowledge as to how he or she conceptualizes stress affecting the ability of an undergraduate student to succeed at their academic institution
- The 18 co-researchers were actively involved with the data generation, analysis and action planning process

The 4 main themes identified by student co-researchers as sources of stress, enablers of stress management and areas of potential improvement include:

- Sense of Community:** UBC as a business; size of UBC; student voice; inter-faculty relations; transition and classroom dynamics; mental health stigma; cultural insensitivity; safety concerns; interpersonal interactions.
- Academic Experience:** academic pressure and competition; expectations; desire for meaningful learning.
- Services and Bi-directional Communication**
- Personal Context:** university transition; life balance; shifting identities; post-graduation concerns; family relationships; financial concerns.

Phase 1 : Participant Characteristics (n=18)

Characteristic	n	%	
Age	20 ≥	4	22
	21-22	10	56
	23 ≤	4	22
Sex	Male	10	56
	Female	8	44
Enrollment Status*	Full-time	14	78
	Part-time	1	6
	Unknown	3	17
Year of Study*	1	0	0
	2	4	22
	3	8	44
	4	6	33
Nationality	Canadian	15	83
	International	3	17
Transfer from other college / university	Yes	5	28
	No	11	61
	Unknown	2	11

Note. * Percentages sum to 99% or 101% due to rounding

PHASE

2

Mental Health Stigma on Campus

As student mental health remains a growing concern, the MHNA phased 2 focuses on understanding **UBC student perspectives on mental health stigma**. Understanding the unique perspective of students is crucial to forming effective anti-stigma efforts.

- Continue using PAR as the methodological framework, we used individual interviews, focus groups and Photovoice groups as means to collect data from both graduate and undergraduate students.

The 3 main themes identified by student co-researchers as campus stigma are:

- Expectations, reactions and uncertainty: Understanding mental health stigma on campus.**
- A triple threat: Consequences of mental health stigma to being, doing, and belonging:**
Being - Putting up a 'no weakness' front, feeling alone
Doing - Lowered academic performance, social isolation
Belonging - Lack of acceptance
- Breaking down mental health stigma through awareness and enhanced service delivery**
Increase student, faculty and staff knowledge and awareness about mental health issues
Incorporate students' insights to create more relevant services and reflect principles of an inclusive campus

Phase 2 — Participant chart (n=24)

Characteristic	n	%	
Age	19-20	8	33
	21-22	5	21
	23 ≤	10	42
	Unknown	1	4
Sex	Male	3	13
	Female	20	83
	Unknown	1	4
Year of Study	1	4	17
	2	5	21
	3	6	25
	4	6	25
	5 ≥	2	8
	Unknown	1	4

Past Events/Projects

In addition to holding independent events, MHAC has partnered with various campus and community organizations and initiatives such as UBC Mental Health Awareness Week, UBC Thrive Week, UBC Wellness Center, Sauder School of Business, Canadian Mental Health Association, amongst several others.

- Film Screenings
- Self Care and Stress Management Workshops
- Careers in Mental Health Night
- Mental Health Symposium
- Mental Health Needs Assessment (MHNA) Project
- Pet Visits

Benefits to Participants

The event improved my understanding of mental health/illness by:
"Making me aware of UBC's mental health resources." - MHAC event participants

The take home message of the event for me was:
"There is more to a person than [their] mental illness." - MHAC event participants
Working with MHAC over the past three years has given me a better idea as to what I would like to do in the future. I have developed great interests towards mental health and health promotion and I hope to further pursue these areas in my studies and career."
- MHAC Work Study Student Staff

PHASE

3

A Two Prongs Project based on Outcomes from Previous Phases

MHNA - Take Action. Seeks to establish the priorities for action: How can we improve UBC's campus learning environment to better promote student mental health and wellbeing? This study engages faculty and staff through a series of focus groups, and seeks input from students through a campus-wide survey.

MHNA - International. Exploring the mental health concerns of international students. How are they similar to domestic students? How are they different? This project engages first and second year international students using a participatory action approach.

mhna.ubc.ca



- We gratefully acknowledge the UBC Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) for their financial support for this project.
- We would also like to thank our event participants, as well as the students, staff and faculty who shared our vision of promoting mental health on campus.