

# IL128-15 Understanding Wellbeing: Theory and Practice

**23/24**

**Department**

Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Elena Riva

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

We are observing a crisis, which is growing each year, in student mental health and wellbeing in the UK universities, including the University of Warwick. The main aim of this module is to inspire you to look at a global, timely and relevant topic, such as wellbeing, in its complexity, discovering the potential of an interdisciplinary approach to the matter. The module will analyse the concept of wellbeing from the perspective of several disciplines (Biomedical disciplines, Sociology, Economics and Arts & Humanities) and will help you understand the complexity of this crucial topic and the relevance of a holistic approach in order to solve the issues related to it.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

The main aim of this module is to look at a global, timely and relevant topic such as wellbeing in its complexity, discovering the potential of an interdisciplinary approach to the matter.

The further aims of the module are:

- to develop students understanding of disciplinary theories and issues related to wellbeing (=

multidisciplinarity)

- to explore the impact of medical, economics, scientific and sociological discoveries in the field of wellbeing.
- to help students to summarise their multidisciplinary learning into a global approach to wellbeing-related issues and problems (= interdisciplinarity), developing their own research in a holistic way that crosses disciplinary boundaries (= transdisciplinarity)
- to engage students with innovative and active learning. Students will be directly involved at every stage of the learning process and at the centre of Team-Based Learning activities throughout the module. The module will embed a variety of innovative pedagogic practices and will constitute a platform for working with students on wellbeing related problems and possible solutions.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The first part of the session will be a lecture given by the subject expert with the second part being a workshop, led by the module leader(s) together with the disciplinary expert, to facilitate the learning experience of the students.

Indicative topics and themes covered on the module include:

1. Module introduction: the session will cover the scaffolding themes of the module, i.e. measuring and monitoring wellbeing, factors that influence wellbeing, interventions to promote wellbeing
2. Introduction to Wellbeing: an introduction to the different perspectives on wellbeing favoured by the different disciplines and the way these influence the measurement of wellbeing, research methodologies and approaches to improving wellbeing at the personal and population levels.
3. Economics of wellbeing: does money buy happiness (and if not, why not?). We will explore whether economics or non-economics factors matter more to our wellbeing and consider how to spend our money wisely to boost our wellbeing.
4. Wellbeing and Failure: through a participatory workshop we will reflect upon issues of mental and physical health in relation to the interdisciplinary subject of failure. We will consider critiques of the wellbeing agenda and challenge conventional narratives of success and wellness. Case studies will draw upon the creative arts as well as medical and social models of disability in order to consider 'failing better' as a strategy for wellbeing.
5. The Biology of Wellbeing: we will explore how individual genetic differences may impact on wellbeing and how an understanding of these differences may provide the blueprint for ensuring optimal wellbeing.
6. Self-maintenance: we will explore some of the challenges of maintaining wellbeing in modern westernised society and consider some of the evidence based strategies for optimal wellbeing.

7. Mindfulness: Following an initial experiential practice, the theoretical underpinnings of modern mindfulness will be introduced. This will lead to a deeper exploration of how mindfulness can support and cultivate wellbeing and the different meditative and “in-the-moment” practices available.
8. Sport and wellbeing: we will explore the role of sport and physical activity in relation to wellbeing.
9. Can Art help Wellbeing?: we will explore ways that creativity and visual arts can be used as an outlet for everyone to create a positive mental attitude, and mental wellbeing on a day to day basis.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Display a deep and critical understanding of the multifaceted and rounded nature of ‘wellbeing’ and the importance of a holistic approach to it in order to have a better understanding of such a complex topic.
- Demonstrate a deep and critical understanding of abstract and complex theories concerning the themes of the module.
- Critically evaluate the problems, limitations and issues connected to the theories, practices and research themes of wellbeing
- Appreciate the value of adopting inter-disciplinary approaches and research methods for understanding global topics such as wellbeing and engage in imaginative and novel attempts to find a solution to complex problems.
- Independently evaluate ideas from the different disciplinary backgrounds for exploring potential inter- and trans- disciplinary answers to the various questions that will be presented during the module and to problems that students will identify during their personal learning process and research.
- Formulate imaginative and novel questions and engage in personal and collaborative attempts to answer them through via independent and collaborative research to develop inter- and trans-disciplinary ideas.

## Indicative reading list

Illustrative Bibliography

Preliminary Reading

Week 1:

1. Student mental wellbeing in higher education. Good practice guide, Universities UK, MWBHE, 2015 (Selected chapters)
2. Brown, P., 2016 ‘The invisible problem? Improving students’ mental health’ HEPI Report 88.

Week 2:

Huppert, F. A., Baylis, N., Keverne, B., 2005. *The Science of Well-Being* Edited. OUP (Selected chapters)

Week 3:

1. Walsh, W., 2012. *Nutrient Power*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.
2. Bartels, M., 2015. Genetics of Wellbeing and Its Components Satisfaction with Life, Happiness, and Quality of Life: A Review and Meta-analysis of Heritability Studies, *Behavior Genetics*, 45(2), pp. 137-156.
3. Wootton, R. E., Davis, O. S. P., Mottershaw, A. L., Wang, R. A. H. and Haworth, C. M. A., 2017. Genetic and environmental correlations between subjective wellbeing and experience of life events in adolescence, *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 26(9), pp. 1119-1127.

Week 5:

1. Clark, A.E., Frijters, P. and Shields, M.A., 2008. Relative income, happiness, and utility: An explanation for the Easterlin paradox and other puzzles. *Journal of Economic literature*, 46(1), pp.95-144.
2. Dunn, E.W., Gilbert, D.T. and Wilson, T.D., 2011. If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21(2), pp.115-125.
3. Kahneman, D. and Deaton, A., 2010. High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being. *Proceedings of the national academy of sciences*, 107(38), pp.16489-16493.

Week 6:

1. Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008. Final Project report. The Government Office for Science, London. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/292450/mental-capital-wellbeing-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/292450/mental-capital-wellbeing-report.pdf)
2. Baer, R. A., Lykins, E. L. B. and Peters, J. R., 2012. Mindfulness and self-compassion as predictors of psychological wellbeing in long-term meditators and matched nonmeditators', *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 7(3), pp. 230-238.

Week 7:

1. Kabat-Zinn, J., 2013. *Full Catastrophe Living: How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation* (revised edition). Piatkus.
2. Williams, M. & Penman, D. (2011). *Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world*. Piatkus.
3. Lauren A. Zimmaro, L. A., et al. (2016). Association of Dispositional Mindfulness with Stress, Cortisol, and Well-Being Among University Undergraduate Students. *Mindfulness*, 7 (4), pp. 874-885. Available at: <https://o-link-springer-com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/article/10.1007%2Fs12671-016-0526-8>

## Week 8:

1. Clow, A., and Edmunds, S. (Eds.), 2014. Physical Activity and Mental Health. Human Kinetics: Leeds.
2. Rodney, J.P., Royse, K.E., Benitez, T.J. and Pekmezi, D.W., 2014. Physical activity and quality of life among university students: exploring self-efficacy, self-esteem, and effect as potential mediators. *Quality of Life Research*, 23(2), 659-667.
3. Ryan, K., 2015. How to improve your wellbeing through physical activity and sport. Mind booklet. <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/2976123/how-to-improve-your-wellbeing-through-physical-activity-and-sport.pdf>

## Week 9:

1. Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2008. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics. (Selected chapters)
2. Bateson, P., 2013. *Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation*. Cambridge University Press. (Selected chapters)

## Week 10:

1. Swaner, L. E., 2007 'Linking Engaged Learning, Student Mental Health and Well-Being, and Civic Development: A Review of the Literature', *Liberal Education*, v93 n1 p16-25.

## Research element

Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to formulate relevant questions and engage in personal and collaborative attempts to answer them in an informed manner (through the use of texts, films, different primary and secondary sources, material provided during the academic lectures and group activities), developing inter- and trans-disciplinary ideas. The students will then work with the module leader on their SDA (student-devised assessment) to select their preferred topic/question and propose novel and creative solutions through undertaking their own research utilising the methodologies and the holistic approach presented throughout the course.

## Interdisciplinary

Each session will include disciplinary and practice-based material as well as active learning methods (i.e. Team Based Learning; Open Space Learning) and staff from a range of departments will present material on specific topics during each week's two-hour session. Learning will be developed in an interdisciplinary style that will help students to explore and deepen their knowledge of that week's theories and set film/texts.

## International

The topic of wellbeing is a global matter and students will be encouraged to recognise the complexity of the topic of wellbeing and its all-rounded/global nature. Students will be supported to summarise their multidisciplinary learning into a global approach to wellbeing-related issues and

problems (= interdisciplinarity), developing their own research in a holistic way that crosses disciplinary boundaries (= transdisciplinarity).

## Subject specific skills

- Appreciate the value of adopting inter-disciplinary approaches and research methods for understanding global topics such as wellbeing and for attempting a solution to difficult issues.
- Understand how to apply this method of approaching complex topics in relation to their core discipline and potential research.
- Independently identify and/or devise interdisciplinary connections between all disciplines - become integrative system thinkers.
- Reflect on the possibility to implement a more global approach to their own studies, work and practises.
- Comprehend how to utilise the communicative and collaborative skills used in the module in their professional life.

## Transferable skills

- Active listening
  - Complex problem solving
  - Critical reflection
  - Independent working skills
  - Interpersonal and communication
  - Management of learning
  - Research skills
  - Self-management and resilience
  - Team working
- 

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	10 sessions of 1 hour (20%)
Seminars	10 sessions of 1 hour (20%)
Project supervision	2 sessions of 1 hour (4%)
Private study	28 hours (56%)
Total	50 hours

### Private study description

Private study hours include background reading, completing reading/other tasks in preparation for

timetabled teaching sessions and follow-up reading work.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

---

## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Student-devised assessment	50%	50 hours	Yes (extension)
Form of assessment method designed by you with the full support of the tutor whereby you will create a piece of work (an article, a short film, a talk, a play, a workshop, a painting, a podcast and so on) that offers a solution to a controversial topic or a question that has arisen during the module. You will be free to select your preferred topic/question and subsequently, you will undertake your own research utilising the methodologies and the holistic approach presented throughout the course. You must demonstrate and communicate the themes and topics presented in the module in your piece and provide a critical description of the theories underpinning your SDA main piece in an accompanying piece. You will be given full tutor support both when planning your devised assessment and when bringing it to fruition. This will include some one-on-one time with a module tutor.			
1500 word Academic writing piece OR Short video and Commentary	50%	50 hours	Yes (extension)
1- 1500 (15 CATS) word academic writing piece OR 2-4 minute video plus 400 word commentary. Traditional style essays, as well as essays that reflect scientific writing (i.e. scientific article style), will be welcome.			

### Feedback on assessment

Formative feedback will be given:

- as part of tutor-responses to blog/digital journal posts;
- in discussion with students in Weeks 5&6 about their progress to-date;
- in Week 10 when tutors discuss with student progress re. final two assessments.

Detailed written and/or oral summative feedback will be provided by module tutors to individual students for each element of assessed work.

---

# Availability

## Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 3 of ULFA-C1A6 Undergraduate Biochemistry with Industrial Placement (MBio)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UFIA-W620 Undergraduate Film Studies
- Year 4 of UFIA-W621 Undergraduate Film Studies (with Year Abroad)
- Year 4 of UFIA-QW26 Undergraduate Film and Literature (with Study Abroad)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UBSA-C700 Undergraduate Biochemistry
- ULFA-C1A2 Undergraduate Biochemistry (MBio)
  - Year 3 of C1A2 Biochemistry
  - Year 3 of C700 Biochemistry
- Year 4 of ULFA-C702 Undergraduate Biochemistry (with Placement Year)
- Year 3 of UBSA-3 Undergraduate Biological Sciences
- Year 3 of ULFA-C1A1 Undergraduate Biological Sciences (MBio)
- Year 4 of ULFA-C113 Undergraduate Biological Sciences (with Placement Year)
- Year 3 of ULFA-C1A5 Undergraduate Biological Sciences with Industrial Placement (MBio)
- Year 3 of UBSA-C1B9 Undergraduate Biomedical Science
- ULFA-C1A3 Undergraduate Biomedical Science (MBio)
  - Year 3 of C1A3 Biomedical Science
  - Year 3 of C1B9 Biomedical Science
- Year 3 of ULFA-C1A7 Undergraduate Biomedical Science with Industrial Placement (MBio)
- Year 4 of ULFA-CB18 Undergraduate Biomedical Science with Placement Year
- Year 3 of ULFA-B140 Undergraduate Neuroscience (BSc)
- Year 3 of ULFA-B142 Undergraduate Neuroscience (MBio)
- Year 3 of ULFA-B143 Undergraduate Neuroscience (with Industrial Placement) (MBio)