



ACT Recovery College

learning · connection · opportunity · hope

Student



Handbook

2020



www.recoverycollegeact.org

learning · connection · opportunity · hope





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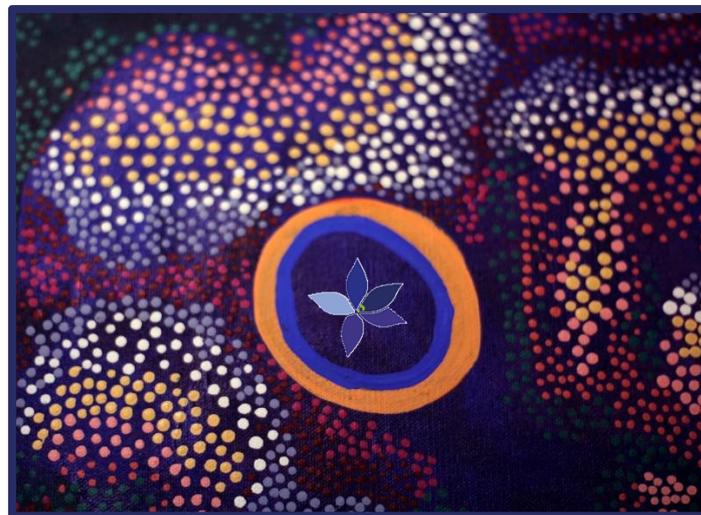
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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this course was developed, the Ngunnawal people, and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders using this student workbook.



Acknowledgement of Contribution

We would also like to acknowledge mental health consumers and carers both past and present that have paved the way for initiatives like the Recovery College to exist and flourish.



The ACT Recovery College

Welcome to the ACT Recovery College.

The ACT Recovery College is a safe place to learn about mental health, recovery and wellbeing. It seeks to bring together the strengths and expertise of the community mental health sector, the adult education sector, and the government sector. The College was officially opened by the ACT Minister for Mental Health, Shane Rattenbury in April 2019.

The College is open to all Canberrans over 18 years. We offer FREE education courses and provide a non-judgmental space for people to learn tips and strategies for developing confidence, control and effective wellbeing and recovery self-management tools. Our courses are co-produced by people with lived (consumer/carer) and professional experience or hosted in partnership with affiliate organisations.

Our Team

The team at the College are happy to provide you with support and guidance to ensure your enrolment and attendance at courses is as easy as possible. We hope that you enjoy learning at the College and find it a satisfying experience.



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#RecoveryCollegeACT

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Course Timetable and Student Enrolments

Check our website or Facebook page.

Opening Hours

We are open from 9am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Our Logo - the Australian Bluebell



The vision for our logo was to reflect the College's values. Traditionally bluebells are emblematic of humility. The colours, blue and green were chosen to symbolise tranquillity, dependability, trust, knowledge, growth, renewal, strength and health.



Our Mission, Vision, Principles and Purpose

Mission Statement

The ACT Recovery College seeks to promote wellbeing and recovery by empowering individuals with the belief and ability to find and develop their own social, emotional and practical resources.

Vision Statement

The Canberra Recovery College – a place of learning, connection, hope and opportunity.

Core Principles

The ACT Recovery College is guided by the following principles:

Learning: promoting person-centred education where the voice of the lived experience is heard and respected in equal partnership with clinicians and professionals.

Connection: enhancing social inclusion and community belonging is central to 'living a good life'.

Opportunity: It's never too late to learn new knowledge, attitude and skills.

Hope: recovery is possible

Our Purpose

- Promote the control of and minimisation of the impacts of mental illness through provision of education, training and information
- Promote person-centred education where the voice of the lived experience is heard and respected in equal partnership with clinicians and professionals
- Promote and advance social inclusion, community belonging and wellbeing



Our Charter

Our *Charter* outlines our values and expectations. These are the beliefs that underpin how we do things at the College.

We are all people. It is sometimes useful to label the roles we play, such as 'client' and 'professional', or 'student' and 'teacher, but these labels do not change the fact that we are all people.

Living is learning. The wisdom that often comes from life experience is immensely valuable. Often what you learn from tough times can guide you and others in profound ways.

All states of mind are human experiences. There is nothing 'abnormal' about extreme emotions, hearing voices, high highs, low lows, and other ways of being in the world. If you have experienced it, it's a human experience.

Many heads are better than one. When it comes to mental health, no one has all the answers. It helps to share what we know.

We call a spade a spade, with respect. Our communication is clear, honest, direct and respectful. We encourage people to describe their experiences in their own words. We respect that what's true for one person may not be for another.

We focus on strengths. We help people identify and build on one another's strengths. We don't get hung up on the challenges people face. A person's strengths can certainly include the things they've learned from mental distress.

It's for everyone. The College is for anyone over 18 years old who wants to get involved. We do our best to remove any barriers people face in teaming or contributing to activities.

Miracles happen in safe environments. We do our best to find out what works best for everyone and who learns or teaches at the College.

Growth happens outside our comfort zone. Just as important as safety is the choice to step outside your comfort zone when you want to. At every level of the College, we encourage experimentation to learn and grow, recognising that this involves taking risks and helping people learn from any mistakes.



Evaluation

The ACT Recovery College has only be funded for a two year pilot, and we are required to gather information to prove the effectiveness of our courses. Another important part of our quality assurance process is to gather data on students' wellbeing, goal attainment and learning journey. You will be invited to contribute to these evaluation process.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Our *Rights & Responsibilities* policy outlines your rights and responsibilities and what is expected of you when you work or study at the College. All staff and students are expected to sign and abide by these *Rights & Responsibilities* prior to working at the College or attending a course.

Students have the right to:

- be treated fairly and with respect by College staff and students;
- be treated in a warm and professional manner;
- privacy, dignity & confidentiality;
- quality provision of courses that provide hope, opportunity, personal control and appreciate individual needs and learning styles;
- complain through appropriate channels;
- be protected from all forms of harassment and discrimination;
- know about policies referring to them;
- a safe & clean learning environment;
- have enquiries dealt with in an efficient manner;
- information, guidance and advice on courses;
- support for specific learning needs if you tell us about a disability or learning difficulty;
- have your personal beliefs, religious and cultural practices respected;
- express your views and be involved in developing the college.



Students have the responsibility to:

- treat other students and staff with respect and fairness;
- behave in an acceptable and appropriate manner towards other students and staff and to respect the property of the College and host community venues;
- refrain from swearing in classrooms and other learning areas;
- not behave in any way that could offend, embarrass or threaten others;
- limit use of mobile phones to emergency use at any time in the class;
- follow normal safety practices (eg: following both written and verbal directions given by staff);
- ask for clarification about anything you are not sure about;

Students should:

- Act in a responsible manner and foster mutual respect and understanding
- Respect the rights, beliefs and opinions of others
- Not act in a way that may be considered threatening or disruptive, or likely to cause physical or emotional harm
- Refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal drugs when attending the College

The College considers the following examples to constitute misconduct, which could lead to the student being asked to leave a session and/or the College.

- Prevention or disruption of learning or other activities.
- Violent, indecent, threatening or offensive behaviour or language.
- Use of alcohol or illegal drugs on the premises.
- Theft, damage or misuse of College or host organisation's property, or the property of staff, students or visitors.



- Action likely to cause injury or impair safety on College or host organisations premises.
- Any act which constitutes a criminal offence.
- Sexual, racial or other harassment of any staff member, student or visitor to the College.

Student Orientation and Well-Being Sessions

When you first enrol at the College you will be invited to a student Orientation and wellbeing session. These sessions are a way for the you to become more familiar with the College and the staff before commencing classes. You can decide if you would be more comfortable with either a male or female staff member and if you would like to meet in person, speak over the phone or on a Zoom meeting. As part of these sessions we will be asking you to fill in some questionnaires and consent form. During the session we will discuss, the course you are enrolled in, your goals for attending the courses and develop a wellbeing plan for you that will be printed and a copy will be given to you.

A safe space for learning

At the ACT Recovery College, we want participants in our courses to share their experiences, ideas and knowledge. To do this safely, we need to be mindful to use strengths-based, recovery-oriented language and leave out specific details of self-harm/suicide attempts (i.e. no graphic descriptions of self-harm, suicide attempts, sexual assault).

Trauma Informed Practice

The ACT Recovery College aims to use the principles of trauma-informed practice.

Please feel free to talk to either of your Co-Facilitators about what will make your learning experience more comfortable and minimise any distress for you.

If you leave the classroom, which you are welcome to do whenever you need, please indicate that you are ok with a thumbs up. If we are concerned for your safety or wellbeing, one of the Co-Facilitators or one of our Student Support Officers will follow to check-in with you.



If you do find that you are distressed while at the College, you are welcome to talk to any of our team. Do not hesitate to interrupt us if we look busy, we are always happy to support you. Please feel free to use our Quiet Room at any time. It is a safe, quiet space with colouring-in, sensory toys, snuggle blankets and dim lighting.

Health, Safety and Well-Being

Students should not attend classes when intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. If a student presents as intoxicated or under the influence of drug, staff will support you to leave the College safely, and encourage you to return another time. Refer to the ACT Recovery College *Work Health and Safety Policy*.

Confidentiality

During a course, you may choose to disclose personal information, where relevant to the learning environment. Safe, personal disclosure and purposeful storytelling is encouraged.

Confidentiality is very important in the classroom. We ask that you respect the confidentiality of all students and educators and not share this information outside the classroom.

Duty of Care

All staff are bound by 'Duty of care' requirements. This means that information remains confidential unless someone discloses they:

1. Are planning to harm themselves
2. Are planning to harm someone else
3. Or any other behaviour raising concern regarding the safety of the person, children or animals in their care

In these situations, the ACT Recovery College has a 'duty of care' to inform a third party – either your emergency support contact, mental health service or police.



Personal Disclosure

It is important to decide what personal information you want to share e.g. disclosure of marital status, where you live, diagnosis, medication, salary, etc. Consider, is it necessary to share this information, will I feel comfortable about this later?

What to avoid

- Do not enter into discussions about medications.
- Do not burden other students or Educators with your problems or medical history.
- Do not disclose your personal contact details.

Students must maintain awareness that some topics may trigger mental distress in other students in the classroom e.g. stories about suicide, disordered eating etc. It is vital to use purposeful storytelling within a *DoNOHarm* framework when sharing relevant aspects of your story in a way that promotes recovery and fosters hope.

‘DoNOharm: Safe Storytelling’ Framework^{©2011}

The ACT Recovery College operates under MIEACT’s ‘DoNOHarm: Safe Storytelling’ Framework ^{©2011} (<https://mieact.org.au/>). This framework is a best-practice approach to communicating about mental distress.

Six Principles of *DoNOHarm*

1. Context / Purpose:

- a. Who is your audience?
- b. What role are you ‘playing’ when you tell your story?
- c. What messages are you trying to put across?
- d. What do you want people to take away from it?
- e. Is it age or audience appropriate?

2. Recovery Emphasis

- a. Recovery is a key part of addressing negative stigma.



- b. Focus on recovery aspects – how you live with the consequences of mental illness in the family.
- c. Doesn't exclude the hardships.
- d. Include where and how you got help.

3. Safe Talking

Avoid talk that may encourage a listener to copy behaviour or have the impression that such behaviours are normal. Details must not be shared about:

- a. planning suicide or suicide attempts;
- b. methods of self-harm;
- c. use of drugs and alcohol as a way of coping with mental illness;
- d. sexual or physical abuse;
- e. description of personal trauma – whether as an adult or child;
- f. behaviours associated with eating disorders: e.g. weight control techniques, purging cycles or excessive exercise.

4. Limits to Helping

- a. Listen
- b. Maintain appropriate boundaries; remember where you end and that there are limits to your capacity
- c. Offer useful information about help-seeking

5. Respectful, inclusive language

- a. Language plays a crucial part in creating stereotypes, myths and stigma.
- b. Use language that is respectful, inclusive, non-judgemental and has an emphasis on recovery.
- c. People 'live' with a mental illness (not suffer) - they are not defined by their mental illness, e.g. 'living with schizophrenia' NOT 'a schizophrenic'.



6. Self-Care

- a. Looking after yourself is essential.
- b. Sharing stories is emotionally demanding.
- c. Monitor yourself closely.
- d. Debriefing opportunities.
- e. Know your limits and triggers.
- f. Expect the unexpected when talking about emotions

Talking about self-harm

- Avoid perpetuating common myths about self-harm.
- Avoid language used in media reports which may glamorise or sensationalise self-harming behaviour.
- Labelling people as ‘cutters’ or ‘self-harmers’ can lead to judgement and alienation of people.

Talking about Suicide

- Do acknowledge that suicidal thoughts happen to some people
- Do highlight that suicidal thoughts are a strong warning sign about not coping.
- Do emphasize the impacts and consequences.
- Do focus on encouraging help seeking and provide information on seeking help.
- Do promote recovery.
- Do not normalise, romanticise, glamorise, trivialise or encourage suicide as a solution.
- Do not provide detailed descriptions of places and methods.
- Do not mention celebrities who have completed suicide.
- Do not talk about suicide as a solution



- Do not talk about suicide as a way to cry for help or as a part of everyday life.
- Do not present data in a way that makes suicide seem common or acceptable.
- Do not normalise suicide or suicidal ideation
- Do not say you “survived” an attempt

If suicide is in your story

- Share what helped you.
- It is important to acknowledge:
 - that suicidal thoughts happen to some people;
 - that people who have suicidal thoughts are not alone.
- Emphasize if someone is feeling suicidal, to seek immediate help.

Use recovery-orientated language

Avoid saying	Consider replacing with
Successful Suicide attempt	A Suicide
Unsuccessful Suicide attempt	Die by suicide
Commit Suicide	Taken their life
Just a cry for help	Non-fatal Suicide
Suicide prone person	Fatal Suicide
Epidemic or spread of suicide	Person at risk of suicide
	Help Prevent Suicide

Talking about Eating Disorders

- Present eating disorders as a serious mental illness accompanied by physical and psychological consequences rather than a lifestyle choice.
- Explore the impacts that eating disorders can have on families and friends.
- Do not detail specific behaviours, measurements and quantities, methods of purging, or body size and shape



- Do not present eating disorders as a glamorous option for dealing with problems
- Be careful not to reinforce the stereotype that only women develop an eating disorder.

Safe Talking about Medications and Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Do not detail specific types of drugs when talking about illicit drug and/or alcohol use
- Do not mention names of specific medications you used or currently use in your recovery
- Don't encourage self-medication

Further information

Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT): <https://mieact.org.au/>

The Mental Health Coordinating Council NSW developed the Recovery Oriented Language Guide in 2013. This was updated in 2018. This is an exceptional resource which can be found on their website: http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide_2018ed_v3_201800418-FINAL.pdf or please ask us for a copy.

Attending Courses

You will be contacted on the day before each class you are enrolled in, to confirm your attendance. If you are unable to attend a class for any reason, please contact the College and let us know, so we can advise the Educators.

Recovery College students are supported to speak freely in class discussions, without interruptions. The Educators will ensure each student is given a fair and equal chance to contribute and that discussion stays relevant to the topic and is purposeful. It is important to remember that we all have different opinions and perspectives, however if we disagree, we must be respectful of other students' point-of-view.



Course Cancellation

There are occasionally times when a course is cancelled. In such instances, the College will endeavour to give as much notice as possible to students.

Student Voice

Your opinion is important to us. If you have any suggestions for courses you may like us to run in the future, or have any other ideas for the College, please email: admin@recoverycollegeact.org. We also have an anonymous Feedback Box in our Reception area.

Compliments, Complaints or Concerns

If you have any compliments or concerns, we also encourage you to talk to our team. If something is concerning you, we can work together to find a solution. If you do not feel comfortable discussing your concerns with members of our team, you can contact Simon Viereck, Executive Officer of the Mental Health Community Coalition ACT (MHCC ACT) who is an independent person, who will look into your specific issue and help provide a resolution.

Ph: 02 6249 7756

Email: simon.viereck@mhccact.org.au

A copy of our complaints policy can be found on our website and in the front office.

Relevant Policies & Procedures

There are a number of policies and procedures that are relevant to students and we suggest that you read them before you attend a session at the College. These policies can be found on our website under the about tab - <https://www.recoverycollegeact.org/our-policies>. These policies include:

- evacuation
- students experiencing distress
- feedback and complaints
- privacy
- health and safety



- access to confidential information

Use Of Photography, Video or Audio Equipment

- The recording of any course sessions is not permitted, by students or educators.
- The use of still photography, video or audio equipment is not permitted, except in agreed circumstances.
- Consent forms are required to be signed for any photographs taken for use in promotional materials. It is not compulsory.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many people will be in a course?

Each course has two facilitators and a maximum of 12 students.

Who will my classmates be?

Your classmates will be a mix of people with lived experience, carers, University/CIT students, and people working in mental health or related areas.

Is the College the same as school, CIT or Uni?

The College is not the same as school, CIT or Uni. There are no exams. There may be homework tasks set to aid reflection or reinforce learning, but this is not marked or assessed. The atmosphere is about the sharing of experiences and learning from each other – as equals - in a safe environment.

What happens once I enrol?

Once you enrol, you will be invited to complete a Student Orientation and Wellbeing session at the College. You will also receive confirmation information.

How many courses can I attend?

You can attend as many courses as you like.



How much does it cost?

All courses are free.

Who teaches the courses?

The courses are delivered by two Educators, at least one of whom is a person with a lived experience of mental health concerns, or caring for someone with mental health concerns. Educators also have professional skills or expertise relevant to the topic.

Can I bring a support person?

Yes, you are welcome to bring a support person to your courses. However, they will need to register as a student and participate in the classroom as a student.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns?

You can call or email the College at any time.

Ph: 02 6247 3821.

Email: admin@recoverycollegeact.org

What happens if I can't attend my course?

If you cannot attend your class, please let us know on the above email or phone. If you have not attended for more than two weeks in a row, your place may be offered to someone else on the waiting list.

How to get involved

- *Drop-in* and have a chat
- Check out our courses and *enrol* as a student
- *Volunteer to help out* (there are many things you can help with)
- Become an *Educator* (help develop or facilitate a course)
- *Join* the Student Rep Committee
- Help *spread the word* that the College is open
- *Have your say!* Tell us what you think



Crisis Support Numbers

If you, or someone you know, needs Mental Health support, the numbers below may be useful.

Lifeline's Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention Helpline: **13 11 14** (24 hours / 7 days a week)

beyondblue: **1300 22 4636** (24 hours / 7 days a week)

Suicide Call Back Service: **1300 659 467** (24 hours / 7 days a week)

Kids Helpline: **1800 55 1800** (24 hours / 7 days a week)

MensLine Australia: **1300 78 99 78** (24 hours / 7 days a week)

SANE Australia Helpline: **1800 187 263** (10am-10pm AEST / Monday to Friday)

