



# Mental Health Awareness Club & Mental Health Needs Assessment Project

## University of British Columbia



### What is MHAC?

The **Mental Health Awareness Club (MHAC)** was established in 2010 to enhance mental health promotion and awareness in the UBC campus community. 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 health issues; thereby, increasing greater community capacity as these students join in promoting mental health awareness on campus. Over the past three years, the club has fostered student learning and peer mentoring while providing a unique opportunity for students to learn about mental health.

### 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.

- **Monthly Speaker Series**
- **Film Screenings**
- **Self Care and Stress Management Workshops**
- **Careers in Mental Health Night**
- **Mental Health Symposium**
- **Mental Health Needs Assessment (MHNA) Project**



### Events Attendee Demographics

| Gender | n  | Percentage |
|--------|----|------------|
| Female | 33 | 70%        |
| Male   | 10 | 21%        |
| Other  | 1  | 2%         |
| N/A    | 3  | 6%         |

| Enrollment Stats | n  | Percentage |
|------------------|----|------------|
| Full Time        | 39 | 83%        |
| Part Time        | 3  | 6%         |
| Other - Alumni   | 2  | 4%         |
| Other - Faculty  | 1  | 2%         |
| N/A              | 2  | 4%         |

| Year of Study | n  | Percentage |
|---------------|----|------------|
| 1             | 11 | 23%        |
| 2             | 8  | 17%        |
| 3             | 13 | 27%        |
| 4             | 8  | 17%        |
| 5             | 2  | 4%         |
| N/A           | 5  | 11%        |

| Faculty          | n  | Percentage |
|------------------|----|------------|
| Applied Sciences | 1  | 2%         |
| Arts             | 18 | 38%        |
| LFS              | 1  | 2%         |
| Medicine         | 3  | 6%         |
| Education        | 2  | 4%         |
| Science          | 15 | 32%        |
| Kinesiology      | 2  | 4%         |
| Music            | 1  | 2%         |
| Nursing          | 2  | 4%         |

### Benefits to participants

#### The event improved my understanding of mental health/illness by:

"Showing how dangerous it can be to judge mentally ill patients."

"Making me aware of UBC's mental health resources."

"Hearing [the speaker's] story first-hand allowed me to gain different perspectives."

#### The take home message of the event for me was:

"There is more to a person than [their] mental illness."

"It's important to relax. Don't stress over small things."

"Make people comfortable, because you never know what difficulties they are facing."

"Learning about the amazing work that is happening at UBC with respect to advocating for student mental health and wellbeing, working with a wonderful research team and building my skills and knowledge."

– Student, MHNA Coordinator

"Being a part of MHAC/MHNA allowed me to not only strengthened my relationships with like-minded individuals, but it also allowed me to gain research experience using the participatory action methodology that I otherwise would have never acquired."

– MHNA Work Study Student Staff

"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

### Mental Health Needs Assessment: Phase 1 – Campus Stress

- Project offered through the Mental Health Awareness Club
- 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
- A working team comprised of MHAC executives, UBC staff, faculty and student co-researchers collaborated to develop and implement the project
- Data was obtained through 3 focus groups, 8 individual interviews and 2 group art activities
- 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 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:

1. **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.
2. **Academic Experience:** academic pressure and competition; expectations; desire for meaningful learning.
3. **Services and Bi-directional Communication**
4. **Personal Context:** university transition; life balance; shifting identities; post-graduation concerns; family relationships; financial concerns.

Table 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 <sup>a</sup>         | Full-time     | 14 78 |
|  | Part-time     | 1 6   |
|  | Unknown       | 3 17  |
| Year of Study <sup>a</sup>             | 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. <sup>a</sup>Percentages sum to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

For the comprehensive report, please contact [mhna.ubc@gmail.com](mailto:mhna.ubc@gmail.com)

### Mental Health Needs Assessment: Phase 2 – Mental Health Stigma on Campus

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

Phase 2 includes a larger working team with up to 50 student co-researchers and our criterion has expanded to include graduate student participation. We hope to establish the MHNA as an ongoing project under MHAC's portfolio. As such, we can continue on understanding the ever-changing needs and capacities of UBC's students while offering them with valuable learning opportunities and supporting their overall health and well-being.

[www.ubcmhac.com](http://www.ubcmhac.com)

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.