



Letter of Information

Study Title: **University student mental health and well-being research:
From Evidence to Action**
Digital Well-Being Resources

Principal Investigator: Dr. Anne Duffy
Division of Student Mental Health
Student Health Services
Department of Psychiatry
Queen's University

Funder: Grant from the Mach-Gaensslen Foundation

Background and purpose of the study

You are invited to participate in a study investigating *the acceptability and utility of digital resources to support university student well-being*. These resources have been shown to be helpful in the general population of young adults and provide support for common well-being and mental health-related challenges. The purpose of this study is to understand if these resources are acceptable and of benefit in supporting university student well-being and academic performance. This study is funded by the Mach-Gaensslen Foundation and has been reviewed for ethical compliance by Queen's University Health Sciences and Affiliated Teaching Hospitals Research Ethics Board (HSREB) (PSIY-692-20).

What will happen in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. For the duration of the current academic year, as part of this research, all consenting undergraduate and graduate students at Queen's University will have free access to effective digitalized well-being resources. Specifically, these digital resources include: a digital tool for students to self-monitor their well-being and related activities and digital apps which offer support for (i) improving sleep quality, (ii) managing stress and anxiety, and (iii) addressing binge eating. Please see www.queensu.ca/u-flourish for detailed information about each digital resource.

If you would like to access any of the well-being resources, you can do so by creating a secure account in i-spero® [<https://www.queensu.i-spero.com/>] using your Queen's University email address (ending in @queensu.ca). i-spero is a new digital technology that supports self-monitoring and provides access to the well-being apps and administers electronic study measures before and following the use of these resources in order to evaluate them from the student perspective. After registering and providing consent to take part, you will be provided with brief electronic questionnaires to complete that ask about your demographics (i.e. age, sex, gender, international or domestic student), lifetime mental health history, your current level of well-being, and common mental health symptoms. The questionnaires should take about 10 minutes to complete, but there is no time limit and you can take as long as you need. You will then be invited to select the digital resource of your choosing. You can also opt to use i-spero for your own well-being monitoring purposes and a brief, introductory video will familiarize you with how to use i-spero and view your own electronically reported information.

Depending on the digital well-being app you select, you may be asked some additional questions. The i-spero system will generate automated feedback based on your responses and provide access to the resource of your choosing. The only potential exception is the digital app for binge eating, which may not be suitable for all students.

Once you have selected the digital app you wish to use, i-spero will provide a secure URL link to access the resource. As part of the research, i-spero will ask you to complete additional brief electronic questionnaires at 4, 8, 12 and 24 weeks after you start using a digital app. The questions will ask about your experience using the resource, in addition to reviewing your well-being and mental health. Once you have completed a resource or if you choose to stop using it, you are able to select and work through one of the other digital resources on offer. This will involve completing the same set of electronic questionnaires. It is only possible to work through one digital resource at a time.

The resources we offer are “self-guided” meaning that **your progress and responses will not be monitored by the research team and the research team cannot accept responsibility for your mental health care.**

To understand the association between your use of the resources and your academic outcomes, your survey responses will be linked via your student number to university administrative (e.g. program and year of study) and academic data (e.g. course grades, withdrawal, academic sanctions). To understand the association between use of the digital resources and use of other mental health resources, your questionnaire responses will also be linked to administrative data from your electronic medical record at student health services (should you have accessed help for a mental health problem) via your student number. Extracted data will be strictly limited to routinely collected administrative service use data to estimate wait times and number of visits by provider type (e.g. family doctor, counsellor or mental health consultant). The research team will not extract any personal health data, such as diagnoses.

At the end of the current academic year, you will be prompted as to whether or not you would like to continue to use i-spero over the next academic year. Reminder emails about how to reactivate your i-spero account for the next academic year will be sent to your university email monthly up until the first week of September, after which your i-spero account will become inactive. Instructions will be provided for you to re-activate your account if desired during the next academic year. We are funded to provide i-spero as part of the research study for two consecutive academic years ending August 31, 2023.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

All of the resources on offer have been previously evaluated for use among young adults. We feel risks are minimal in this study. We have also followed all regulations in terms of safeguarding your data (see Confidentiality and research data section below). Some of the questions in electronic surveys may cause upset or bring up painful memories. If you experience any distress from participating in this study you may stop the survey at any time, or skip any upsetting questions. If your distress continues after leaving the survey, we have provided a list of supportive services that can be helpful at the end of this Letter. These resources are also listed at the end of each baseline survey, on i-spero, and on the QSWWS website (<https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/resources>).

Your symptom and well-being entries are not monitored by the research team and the research team cannot accept responsibility for your care.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

There may be benefits to your well-being and mental health through use of the available digital resources. i-spero will send automated messages based on your own entries to suggest appropriate resources that might be helpful. We also hope that the study findings will help us together improve resources and services available to support university students' well-being and academic success moving forward.

Payment or reimbursement

Access to our resources is offered free of charge for all Queen's University students through an in-kind contribution by the resource developers and through research grant funding. As a thank you for your participation in completing the study measures, you will be offered a Starbucks e-gift card worth \$5 for completed study measures up to 8-weeks and the opportunity to be entered into a draw for a chance to win 1 of 5 iPads for participants who complete the full 24-weeks of study measures.

Confidentiality and use of research data

Please be assured that your survey answers will be kept strictly confidential. For this study, we are collaborating with several external groups (data processors) in the UK including the University of Oxford, Big Health and P1Vital (the provider of i-spero) who host the digital resources we are making available and will process the data you input. The collection of your personal identifiable information is minimal (i.e., student email). Further, all information they hold will be encrypted and password protected and will only be accessible by vetted individuals. The information you enter into the apps will be kept strictly confidential.

The data you provide will be held securely on data processor servers during the study. At the end of the study, encrypted data files will be securely transferred for analysis. These external groups will store data only up until deletion is requested by our research team, after all relevant data has been safely transferred to us. Our collaborators acknowledge their requirement to: (i) comply with the applicable privacy legislation and (ii) maintain adequate safeguards and inform us if there is a breach of these safeguards.

The information you input will be linked to administrative health and academic data through your student number. Specifically, your i-spero data will be linked to administrative health data from your electronic medical record (EMR) at QSWs. This will allow us to evaluate the transition to mental health care for students in the study who try to access mental health care. Extracted data will be strictly limited to routinely collected health administrative data needed to estimate wait times and pathways to and through mental health related appointments (e.g. time to see family doctor, counsellor or mental health consultant). The research team will not extract any personal health data such as diagnoses or treatment. Academic outcome data linked in this study will include course grades, overall grade percentage, rate of failed courses, and any instance of academic probation or suspension.

Encrypted password protected data files will be stored on password-protected university computers. Data will be stored separately from student email addresses provided. Study data will be assigned a unique identifier so that individuals cannot be identified in any analysis. Reports of this study will use group data and will not discuss individual information. Only members of the research team at Queen's University will have access to the data following data transfer. However, the HSREB may require access to study records to monitor the ethical conduct of the research.

Data will be securely stored on university servers for a minimum of 5 years after study close and de-identified data will be stored in a secure university research data repository indefinitely. We may collaborate with other researchers at other institutions to analyze de-identified study data. Researchers from inside and outside of Canada can apply to access this de-identified information for research purposes only.

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. You can stop using our digital resources at any point. Even if you choose to take part, you can withdraw from the study and have all your data removed without penalty and without giving a reason at any time until the point of publication. You just need to tell us by emailing flourish@queensu.ca. Furthermore, you can delete your i-spero account or digital resource accounts with the app providers at any time. Your decision whether or not to be part of the study will not affect your access to other university supports or your academic standing.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

This study is expected to complete by September 2023. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please write to us by email to request information. We will share findings in manuscripts and through the Queen's Journal, social media and our website: <https://www.queensu.ca/u-flourish>

Questions about the study?

Any questions about study participation may be directed to the investigators and their research team through the study email: flourish@queensu.ca. Alternatively you could contact the lead investigator Dr. Anne Duffy at 613-533-2508 directly. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant please contact - Queen's University HSREB at 1-844-535-2988 (toll free in North America) or email HSREB@queensu.ca.

We want to thank you for considering taking part in this research! The responses you and other students provide will identify areas where we can improve education and health promotion resources to support well-being and academic success among university students.



IMPORTANT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INFORMATION

IN A LIFE OR DEATH EMERGENCY

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts and think that you might be unable to keep yourself safe, visit your nearest hospital emergency department or call 911.

IF YOU ARE IN CRISIS

If you are in crisis and cannot wait to receive medical attention or are unsure what to do, call Addiction and Mental Health Services KFL&A at 613-544-4229 (local) or Crisis Services Canada at 1-833-456-4566 (Canada-wide).

IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF NON-URGENT CARE

If you are concerned about your mental health and are in need of non-urgent care, there are several options you might consider.

Your family doctor

Book an appointment with your family doctor. They can offer advice or refer you to other more specific services to get help.

Queens University Student Wellness Services.

If you do not have a family doctor, Student Wellness Services can offer a range of services, including counselling and medical assessment and treatment. The Counselling Service can help you address personal or emotional problems that are getting in the way of having a positive experience at Queen's University and realising your full academic and personal potential. Services are free and confidential. It is important to know that the Counselling Service is not just for those with a diagnosis: you can contact them for any reason. To make an appointment, call 613-533-2506.

For further information about the services provided by Queen's Student Wellness Services please visit: <http://queensu.ca/studentwellness/health-services>