

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

Use of RELIEF App for Student Mental Well-Being Support

(For Implementation Across Participating Universities)

Education in India is highly competitive and places substantial psychological strain on students, with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress rising significantly after admission. Studies report wide prevalence ranges—depression (8.5–71%), anxiety (~35%), and stress (~51%)—alongside a persistent treatment gap driven by stigma, confidentiality concerns, and limited awareness. These challenges are compounded by academic pressure, transitional stressors, and negative attitudes toward mental illness among students. Globally, similar trends highlight university students as a high-risk group for psychological distress, often with underrecognized early symptoms due to reliance on self-referral systems. To address this, multidimensional mental health assessment approaches have been proposed, integrating factors such as stress, resilience, functioning, and risk indicators rather than relying solely on symptom checklists. The development of tools like the Mental Health Assessment Scale for Students (MASS) reflects this shift, aiming to enable early identification, risk stratification, and targeted interventions. Additionally, psychometric tests underpin such tools, requiring strong reliability (e.g., internal consistency, test–retest stability) and validity (e.g., construct and predictive validity) to ensure accurate and meaningful assessment outcomes.

References:

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Important Information

Confidentiality, Choice, and How You Can Take the MASS Screening

Your privacy and safety are our highest priorities. The MASS (Mental Health Assessment Scale for Students) screening is confidential, secure, and designed to support you. Its purpose is to empower you to understand your mental health, make informed decisions, and follow appropriate recommendations—free from stigma, pressure, or negative opinions.

At the same time, we recognize that in many social and family contexts, students may value the involvement of parents, teachers, or trusted professionals. Evidence also supports collaborative care, where individuals may benefit from guidance and shared decision-making with people they trust.

To respect both your autonomy and these supportive relationships, you may choose any one of the following options:

1. Independent Participation (Recommended Default)

You may take the MASS screening on your own as an adult, in complete privacy. You can review your results independently and decide whether to follow the recommendations or seek support. No information will be shared with anyone without your consent.

2. Participation with Parental Involvement

If you prefer, you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) may jointly decide to take the screening. In this case, you will be asked to provide explicit consent confirming that you are willing to share your responses and results with them. This option supports open discussion and shared understanding.

3. Participation with Institutional or Professional Support

You may also choose to take the screening under the guidance of a trusted professional, such as a university counseling center, doctor, or mental health professional. If you select this option, you will provide informed consent allowing your results to be shared with the chosen support provider, so they can assist you appropriately.

Important Notes:

- Your participation is always voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time.
- No data will be shared with parents, faculty, or any third party without your clear and documented consent.
- The MASS screening is a support tool, not a diagnosis. It helps identify areas where support may be useful.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you may pause or stop the assessment and seek help from someone you trust.

By offering these options, we aim to balance your independence, your privacy, and your access to support, so that you can choose what works best for you.

If you have any questions, please contact the support team before proceeding.

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a mental health screening initiative being conducted within your institution using the Mental Health Assessment Scale for Students (MASS). The purpose of this project is to better understand student wellbeing by assessing multiple aspects of mental health, including stress, emotional symptoms, functioning, resilience, and early warning signs. This initiative is designed to support early identification of difficulties and to improve access to appropriate resources and support services for students.

Participation in this screening is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time without any academic, administrative, or personal consequences. The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used only for academic, research, and service improvement purposes. Individual responses will not be shared with faculty involved in teaching or evaluation, and results will not be included in academic records. Data will be stored securely and reported only in aggregated or anonymized form.

Please note that the MASS scale is a screening tool and not a diagnostic instrument. It is intended to provide an overview of your current mental health status and identify areas where support may be beneficial. It does not replace professional clinical evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment. If your responses suggest that you may benefit from additional support, you may be provided with information about available mental health services. Seeking further help is entirely your choice.

Some questions in this assessment relate to stress, mood, and personal experiences, which may feel sensitive. You are encouraged to answer honestly, but you may skip any question you are not comfortable answering. If completing the screening causes discomfort or distress, you are advised to pause and seek support from a trusted person or a qualified mental health professional.

This project has been designed in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. By proceeding with the screening, you indicate that you have read and understood this information and consent to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact the designated research or student support team.

Your participation can contribute to improving student mental health services and fostering a more supportive academic environment.

This project has been developed to extend structured support for mental wellness among university students, recognizing that many students experience stress, adjustment difficulties, emotional concerns, and related challenges during their academic journey.

The initiative provides students with access to a set of scientifically developed self-assessment tests that can be completed in approximately 10–15 minutes. These assessments are designed to help students reflect on their current state of mental well-being and identify areas where support may be beneficial.

Participation in these assessments is:

- Voluntary
- Based on informed consent
- Completely confidential
- Protected with a high degree of data privacy

All information entered into the system remains private. No individual data is accessible to the university, faculty, parents, or any third party. The results are available only to the student, ensuring a safe and non-judgmental environment for self-reflection.

Upon completion of the assessment, the student receives a personalized report that provides:

- A detailed description of their current mental wellness status,
- Insights into stress levels, coping patterns, and emotional health,
- Practical suggestions for self-care and improvement.

Students are encouraged—if they feel comfortable—to discuss the report with their parents, teachers, or mentors and to follow the recommendations provided, which may include seeking counselling support.

For further assistance students are requested to connect with student wellness centre of their university, their email or link is given in the report or at the end of the tests.

Please note:

- The report provides a direct link to their University Wellness Centre website, where they may request an appointment and follow the established procedures of the university counselling or wellness clinic.
- If immediate emotional support is needed, students may call the national mental health helpline Tele Manas 14416 to speak with a trained professional.
- Students who wish to consult a psychiatrist online may access services through www.esanjeevani.com.

This program is intended as an early-support and guidance mechanism, helping students recognize concerns, seek help proactively, and strengthen their overall well-being while continuing their academic pursuits.

The following SOP outlines the procedures for implementation, use, and coordination of this initiative across participating universities.

Caution

We encourage you to talk to your parents or teacher,

Or dial national help line 14416,

Or if you are feeling anxious and unable to decide what to do, its best to call helpline/counselling services of your university.

We recognise that your information shall remain confidential but in interest of safety to prevent any untoward incident like self-harm we are constrained to inform your most responsible relative or parent, notified by you for this purpose.

We have asked you to provide phone number of parents/most responsible relative or anybody from your institution (optional).

Important Note on Limits of Confidentiality

While this program maintains strict confidentiality and a high level of data privacy, there is one essential exception governed by ethical duty of care and the need to ensure student safety.

If a student's responses indicate serious risk to their own life, including suicidal thoughts, intent, or behaviors, the program is ethically obligated to initiate a safety response. In such situations:

- The confidentiality provision does not apply.

- The system may notify the responsible contact person (parent/guardian/relative/emergency contact) identified by the student at the time of consent.
- This step is taken solely to protect the student's life and ensure timely support, not for disciplinary or academic purposes.
- The student will, wherever possible, be informed that such notification is being made in their interest and safety.

This safeguard follows established ethical guidelines for mental health support, where protection of life takes precedence over confidentiality in high-risk situations.

All other information remains fully confidential and accessible only to the student.

1. Purpose

This SOP provides a standardized framework for the adoption, use, and governance of the RELIEF App as a digital platform to support student mental well-being, early identification of distress, guided self-help, and referral to appropriate services across universities.

The app is intended to function as a preventive, supportive, and educational tool, not as a substitute for clinical diagnosis or emergency care.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to:

- All enrolled students of participating universities.
- Faculty mentors and designated university coordinators.
- Counseling services and mental health professionals linked to the program.
- University administration overseeing student welfare initiatives.

3. Guiding Principles

7. Universal Access – Available to every student; not restricted to those with diagnosed conditions.
8. Confidentiality First – Student privacy is protected at all stages.
9. Self-Help with Support Pathways – Encourages autonomy while enabling timely assistance.
10. Early Identification & Prevention – Focus on stress management before crisis emerges.
11. Non-Stigmatizing Engagement – Positioned as a wellness and performance-support tool.
12. Institutionally Supported, Student-Owned – Universities facilitate; students voluntarily engage.

4. Objectives of Using RELIEF App

- Promote daily mental well-being practices among students.
- Enable self-screening for stress, mood, sleep, and adjustment concerns.
- Provide structured psychoeducation and coping tools.
- Facilitate early referral to university support systems when needed.

- Create anonymized well-being trends to guide institutional interventions.
- Strengthen resilience, academic persistence, and help-seeking behavior.

5. Voluntary Enrollment

Students:

- Use webApp on www.mansikshakti.com or Download RELIEF App.
- Register using university credentials.
- Accept informed consent and privacy policy.

No academic penalty or monitoring is attached to non-use.

6. Data Privacy and Ethics

- Individual student data remains confidential.
- Universities receive only aggregated, anonymized trends.
- No data used for academic evaluation or disciplinary action.
- Complies with applicable digital data protection norms.
- Students may opt out anytime.

7. Crisis Management Disclaimer and Risk Management Protocol

To ensure student safety and timely support, the following stepwise risk management approach will be followed:

Level 1 – Encourage Personal Support

Students are encouraged to speak with their parents, a trusted family member, teacher, or mentor about their concerns and seek informal support.

Level 2 – National Helpline Access

Students may call the National Mental Health Helpline 14416 for immediate emotional support and guidance from trained professionals.

Level 3 – University Support Services

If a student feels anxious, distressed, or is unable to decide what to do, they are strongly advised to contact the counselling or helpline services of their university for professional assistance.

Level 4 – Safety Exception to Confidentiality

We recognize and respect that all personal information shared in this program is confidential. However, in situations where there is concern about safety or risk of self-harm, confidentiality cannot be maintained.

In such circumstances, and solely in the interest of preventing harm, we may need to inform the parent or most responsible relative identified by the student.

For this purpose, students are requested to provide:

13. Contact details of a parent or most responsible relative (mandatory for safety communication).
14. Contact details of one person from the institution (optional), such as a mentor, faculty member, or warden, who may assist in facilitating support if required.

This step is taken only to ensure the student's safety and well-being.

8. Expected Outcomes

- Increased self-awareness and resilience among students.
- Earlier help-seeking and reduced crisis escalation.
- Improved academic continuity and campus belonging.
- Creation of a digitally supported culture of well-being.
- Scalable model for multi-university collaboration.

9. Review of SOP

This SOP shall be reviewed annually and revised based on:

- Student feedback,
- Technological upgrades,
- Institutional needs,
- National mental health and education priorities.