

## **Record of Discussion of Online Session of Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing, held on 21.04.2026 at 10:00 AM**

1. An online session under the Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing was conducted on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026 as part of the Ministry of Education's sustained efforts to integrate mental health, resilience, and wellbeing into the higher education ecosystem. The session was organised for nominated members from centrally funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A total of 82 participants joined the session out of which 75 were faculty members.

2. This was the 41<sup>st</sup> online session in the ongoing fortnightly series since the launch of the programme in May 2024. The initiative continues to support the development of institutional ecosystems that are sensitive to student wellbeing in alignment with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Till date, more than 2800 faculty members from more than 160 HEIs have participated in the programme.

3. In his opening remarks, Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Department. He highlighted that the session was being held in the backdrop of several recent unfortunate incidents of student suicides reported from premier institutions, underlining the urgency of strengthening mental health support systems in higher education. Referring to the vision of NEP 2020, he emphasised the need for a supportive learning ecosystem that enables students to develop cognitive, emotional, academic, and life-skills capacities.

4. He noted that the capacity building programme was conceived as an integrated initiative to promote positive mental health, resilience, and wellbeing through dialogue, peer learning, and institutional engagement. Stressing that mental health has emerged as a critical national concern, he called upon higher education institutions to play a proactive role in destigmatising the issue, fostering open conversations, and building institutional capacity to respond effectively. He also referred to these ongoing fortnightly sessions and the National Wellbeing Conclaves organised at IIT Hyderabad and IIT Bombay as important platforms for collective learning and collaboration.

5. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal took over the session and opened the discussion by situating student wellbeing within the broader goals of education, noting that recent distressing incidents in higher education institutions underscore the urgency of building more proactive, inclusive, and compassionate campus ecosystems. He emphasised that mental health should not be seen separately from education, but as an integral part of holistic human development rooted in Indian knowledge traditions and reaffirmed through NEP 2020.

6. Referring to recent national conclaves and institutional engagements at campuses such as BHU, IIT Ropar, IIT Hyderabad, and IIT Bombay, Dr. Nagpal highlighted encouraging examples of faculty-student collaboration and evolving wellbeing cultures. Drawing on global and national evidence, he noted rising mental health concerns among young people, particularly in the 15-35 age group, and stressed the need for early interventions, induction programme, life-skills platforms, and supportive campus practices. He also discussed the updated WHO understanding of mental health as the ability to cope with life's stresses, realise one's potential, work productively, and contribute to society, with faculty participants affirming its relevance for student development.

7. A major theme of the discussion was loneliness and digital over-dependence among students. Participating faculty observed that even students sharing hostel rooms often remain isolated through excessive mobile use. Suggestions included awareness programmes on digital detox, creating vibrant

hostel communities through cultural and recreational activities, strengthening hostel warden engagement, and fostering more organic peer interaction during the crucial first year transition to campus life. Dr. Nagpal endorsed these ideas, describing hostels as important sub-units of the institutional family and emphasising the role of faculty and wardens as gatekeepers of student wellbeing.

8. Ms. Geeta Mehrotra conducted an interactive session on student and faculty wellbeing, emotional resilience, and the role of teachers in promoting student mental health. She emphasised that while student wellbeing is a major concern, faculty mental health is equally important, as teachers can support students effectively only when they themselves are emotionally healthy and balanced. A key theme was the growing communication gap and loneliness among students despite constant digital connectivity. Participants observed that many students remain absorbed in mobile phones, hesitate to engage socially, and avoid participating in campus activities. It was noted that addressing this requires continuous institutional effort, multiple engagement strategies, and informal spaces for interaction.

9. Ms. Mehrotra led participating faculty through reflective activities where they shared memories, sources of happiness, hopes, and meaningful life experiences. These exchanges demonstrated that wellbeing is often rooted in simple experiences such as family time, sports, supportive relationships, and a sense of purpose. Storytelling and personal sharing were seen as powerful tools for building trust, connection, and emotional openness.

10. The discussion underlined that faculty members are important role models. Teachers must themselves demonstrate resilience, empathy, confidence, communication skills, and optimism if they expect students to develop these qualities. Positive self-esteem and self-belief were highlighted as essential foundations for supporting others. Ms. Mehrotra concluded by encouraging classrooms to become more interactive, humane, and joyful spaces through dialogue, storytelling, music, and participatory activities. Participants agreed that faculty should be observant, approachable, compassionate, and attentive to students' emotional needs, recognising that academic success is closely linked to holistic wellbeing.

11. The session was then carried forward by Prof. Abhishek Kumar Srivastava from IIT-BHU who presented the institute's SAKHA wellness model, a holistic and evolving framework for student wellbeing. Introduced in 2019, SAKHA (Student Counselling Services) functions as an institute-level faculty-student support body operating through the Office of Student Affairs. Its name signifies "friend on campus," reflecting its peer-support orientation and accessible identity for students. The model goes beyond conventional counselling by addressing wellbeing through multiple interconnected dimensions: mental health, academics, career guidance, skill development, research support, physical health, social connectedness, and emotional resilience.

12. SAKHA operates through a layered structure comprising faculty coordinators, professional counsellors, wellness wardens, trained student volunteers, and specialised councils. These councils focus on areas such as wellness, academics, careers, skill development, and international exchange. Students facing challenges are connected to the most appropriate support channel quickly and efficiently through this integrated network.

13. Since its inception, the initiative has organised over 400 sessions, conducted more than 6000 counselling interactions, and supported over 9000 students. It also runs induction and mentorship programmes in which trained volunteers support new students during their transition to campus life. Additional initiatives include reading circles, orientation support, digital outreach, workshops, and group activities that foster belonging and engagement.

14. Reflecting on challenges, Prof. Srivastava noted that the major limitation is not the model itself but resource constraints, especially the availability of counsellors. Integrating wellness systems with formal administrative processes can also create delays. However, he emphasised that the model is self-evolving, values-driven, and adaptable. He suggested that SAKHA offers a practical, resource-efficient framework that other higher education institutions could contextualise and adopt.

15. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, emphasised the need for a data-driven approach to student mental health. While many institutions are introducing wellbeing initiatives, he argued that it is equally important to measure which interventions are truly effective. In resource-constrained settings, universities must focus on programmes that create real impact rather than investing in activities with limited outcomes. He described his organisation's work in collecting large-scale, near real-time data on youth mental health in India. This data captures both wellbeing levels and the factors influencing them, enabling evidence-based decision-making. Their framework uses a broad measure of mental wellbeing that draws from psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience, which also considering how mental health affects productivity and day-to-day functioning. Using comparative data from 2008 and 2021, he highlighted a major shift – young adults, who earlier showed strong wellbeing, now appear among the most vulnerable age groups in both India and globally. This indicates growing pressures on newer generations.

16. Factors linked to declining wellbeing included family disconnection, parental neglect, early smartphone exposure, and changing social environments. He also noted emerging signals around lifestyle factors such as frequent consumption of packaged foods and heated food in plastic containers, though these findings are still exploratory. Prof. Swaminathan concluded that institutions need continuous assessment with rapid feedback loops, allowing timely anonymous insights within weeks. Such systems can evaluate pre and post-intervention outcomes, identify key insights, and help universities build more effective, evidence-based student mental health strategies.

17. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Shivakumar Kandekar from NIEPA.

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**List of Attendees  
Faculty Members**

S. No	Name of Institution	Faculty Nominated	Attendees	Absentees
1	Aligarh Muslim University	1. Juhi Gupta 2. Lucky Khan 3. Mariyam Fatima 4. Mohammad Swalehin 5. Mohd Arif Khan 6. Mohd Shakir 7. Nasheed Imtiaz 8. Sadaf Nasir 9. Salma Kaneez 10. Shazia Farooq Fazli 11. Tauseef Fatima	1. Juhi Gupta 2. Lucky Khan 3. Mohammad Swalehin 4. Mohd Arif Khan 5. Mohd Shakir 6. Nasheed Imtiaz 7. Sadaf Nasir 8. Salma Kaneez 9. Shazia Farooq Fazli 10. Tauseef Fatima	1. Mariyam Fatima
2	Central Sanskrit University	1. Aarti Meena 2. Ch. K. Padmanabham 3. Krishna Sharma 4. Leena Sakkarwal 5. Manish Kumar Chandak 6. Pramod Bhat 7. Punita Gupta 8. Raghavendra Bhat 9. Rishi Raj 10. Sarvesh Tripathi 11. Seema Agarwal	1. Aarti Meena 2. Krishna Sharma 3. Manish Kumar Chandak 4. Punita Gupta 5. Sarvesh Tripathi 6. Seema Agarwal	1. Ch. K. Padmanabham 2. Leena Sakkarwal 3. Pramod Bhat 4. Raghavendra Bhat 5. Rishi Raj
3	University of Allahabad	1. Amreen Ali 2. Narsingh Kumar 3. Pankaj Tripathi 4. Rajnesh Meena 5. Ritu Modi 6. Sandip Anand 7. Sanjay Kumar	1. Pankaj Tripathi	1. Amreen Ali 2. Narsingh Kumar 3. Rajnesh Meena 4. Ritu Modi 5. Sandip Anand 6. Sanjay Kumar
4	Central Institute of Technology (CIT), Kokrajhar, Assam	No nominations received		
5	Pandit Dwarka Prasad Mishra Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design & Management	1. Akshay Pandey 2. Deepmala 3. K Ponappa 4. M K Roy 5. Manish Thakur 6. Pushpa Raikwal	1. Akshay Pandey 2. Deepmala 3. K Ponappa 4. S Gowthaman 5. Sachin Kumar	1. M K Roy 2. Manish Thakur 3. Pushpa Raikwal 4. Rabindra Prasad 5. S K Tiwari 6. S S Lamba

	(PDPM-IIITDM), Jabalpur	7. Rabindra Prasad 8. S Gowthaman 9. S K Tiwari 10. S S Lamba 11. Sachin Kumar	6. Swapnali Gadekar	
6	Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal	1. Archana Soni 2. Ashish Gupta 3. Bholanath Roy 4. Dharendra Mishra 5. Meena Agrawal 6. Ravindra Jilte 7. Rutuja Chavan 8. Romilla Devi 9. Ruchi Khare 10. Vijay Singh Rawat 11. Vivek Garg	1. Archana Soni 2. Ashish Gupta 3. Dharendra Mishra 4. Meena Agrawal 5. Ravindra Jilte 6. Rutuja Chavan 7. Romilla Devi 8. Ruchi Khare 9. Vijay Singh Rawat 10. R. N. Yadav	1. Bholanath Roy 2. Vivek Garg
7	National Institute of Technology, Sikkim	1. Abhishek Rajan 2. Ankit Bhardwaj 3. Biswajit Roy 4. Jai Gopal Gupta 5. Jeetendra Singh 6. Krishna Kumar 7. Krishna Kumar Maurya 8. Molay Roy 9. Om Prakash 10. Sanjay Kumar Jana 11. Vivek Kumar	1. Abhishek Rajan 2. Ankit Bhardwaj 3. Biswajit Roy 4. Jai Gopal Gupta 5. Jeetendra Singh 6. Krishna Kumar 7. Krishna Kumar Maurya 8. Molay Roy 9. Om Prakash 10. Sanjay Kumar Jana 11. Vivek Kumar	-
8	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	1. Amita (Pathak) Mahanty 2. Arnab Atta 3. Arun Chakraborty 4. Bharath Haridas Aithal 5. Dipesh Vinod Katira 6. Jayashree Aanand Gajjam 7. Kaushal Kumar Bhagat 8. Manish Pandey 9. Nitin Gupta 10. Richa Chopra 11. Swanand Ravindra Khare	1. Bharath Haridas Aithal 2. Manish Pandey 3. Richa Chopra	1. Amita (Pathak) Mahanty 2. Arnab Atta 3. Arun Chakraborty 4. Dipesh Vinod Katira 5. Jayashree Aanand Gajjam 6. Kaushal Kumar Bhagat 7. Nitin Gupta 8. Swanand Ravindra Khare

9	Indian Institute of Technology, Ropar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anupam Agrawal</li> <li>2. Aparna N</li> <li>3. Deepak Kumar</li> <li>4. G. Sankara Raju Kosuru</li> <li>5. Sam Darshi</li> <li>6. Sandeep Gautam</li> <li>7. Shweta Jain</li> <li>8. Srivatsava Naidu</li> <li>9. Subash Chandra Martha</li> <li>10. T.J. Dhillip Kumar</li> <li>11. Vandana Bharti</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anupam Agrawal</li> <li>2. Aparna N</li> <li>3. Deepak Kumar</li> <li>4. G. Sankara Raju Kosuru</li> <li>5. Sam Darshi</li> <li>6. Sandeep Gautam</li> <li>7. Shweta Jain</li> <li>8. Srivatsava Naidu</li> <li>9. Subash Chandra Martha</li> <li>10. T.J. Dhillip Kumar</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vandana Bharti</li> </ol>
10	IIM Raipur	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amit Kumar Vishwakarma</li> <li>2. Ashapura Baruah</li> <li>3. Bhawna Priya</li> <li>4. Himanshu Shekhar Shrivastava</li> <li>5. P Ketan Kumar Reddy</li> <li>6. Rabin Kumar Jana</li> <li>7. Ritu Gupta</li> <li>8. Sangita Chowdhary</li> <li>9. Shabna P</li> <li>10. Smriti Pande</li> <li>11. Suneetha Saggurti</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amit Kumar Vishwakarma</li> <li>2. Ashapura Baruah</li> <li>3. Bhawna Priya</li> <li>4. Himanshu Shekhar Shrivastava</li> <li>5. P Ketan Kumar Reddy</li> <li>6. Rabin Kumar Jana</li> <li>7. Ritu Gupta</li> <li>8. Sangita Chowdhary</li> <li>9. Shabna P</li> <li>10. Smriti Pande</li> <li>11. Suneetha Saggurti</li> </ol>	-
11	IISER Tirupati	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Doreswamy</li> <li>2. Jatish Kumar</li> <li>3. Nandini Rajamani</li> <li>4. Padmabati Mondal</li> <li>5. Rajesh Viswanathan</li> <li>6. Saikranthi K</li> <li>7. Santanu Paul</li> <li>8. Sivakumar Vallabhapurapu</li> <li>9. Soumit Sankar Mandal</li> <li>10. Suchi Goel</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Doreswamy</li> <li>2. Jatish Kumar</li> <li>3. Padmabati Mondal</li> <li>4. Santanu Paul</li> <li>5. Sivakumar Vallabhapurapu</li> <li>6. Soumit Sankar Mandal</li> <li>7. Suchi Goel</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nandini Rajamani</li> <li>2. Rajesh Viswanathan</li> <li>3. Saikranthi K</li> </ol>

12	School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi	No nominations received
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Affiliation Details	Name of the Attendees
Ministry Officials, Resource Persons, Officials from NIEPA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education</li> <li>2. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist &amp; Program Director, Expressions India</li> <li>3. Ms Geeta Mehrotra, Faculty, University and School Life Skills, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Expressions India</li> <li>4. Prof. Abhishek Kumar Srivastava, IIT-BHU</li> <li>5. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University</li> <li>6. Prof. Shivakumar Kandekar, NIEPA</li> <li>7. Ms. Richa Shrivastava, Consultant, D/o Higher Education</li> </ol>