

Pastoral Care at UWC ISAK Japan, 2022/2023

UWC ISAK Japan strives to offer extremely high-quality care, support and guidance to its students, and to improve upon this regularly through deliberate and focused research and training. This is a domain of special attention in the current school year.

During the past 6 months, and following on the recommendations of a specially commissioned report, the School has reviewed policies, procedures, and programming associated with mental health and with general wellness. The aim has been to improve students' campus experience and to assist them in lifelong learning, in living healthy balanced lifestyles, and in preparing themselves for life after UWC ISAK Japan. The special report referenced in the first sentence of this paragraph was published on the UWC ISAK website. Having acted on many of the recommendations of that report, which is a lengthy document, the report itself has now been replaced by this short summary of Work in Progress.

The Board and Leadership Team, with the assistance of external experts including but not limited to the writers of the special report, have been working diligently with the UWC ISAK Japan community to act on the items recommended by a review team in July 2022, and to bring about improvements in all areas of the School. There is a continuation plan to address areas of improvement throughout the school year. As well as continuing to review and update best practices in all areas of the school in line with leading research, the Board has appointed a newly formed Safeguarding Committee to improve the escalation protocol and offer support to the safeguarding team on campus. A strategic plan is currently in development for even clearer aims for the future. All of this is work that is ongoing – we take this work of improvement most seriously, and we know that we must always be alert to keep on doing better for our students.

The Board approved additional special funds of 130 million yen in the current budget year to support the full implementation of the recommended improvements. The budget has supported, amongst other action steps, the appointment of additional human resources, professional development and online programmes. This work will continue in future years, as it is not yet and never will be complete.

To support this ongoing transparent dialogue the school has engaged in open discussions with students, faculty and staff, and with the families of current students. This has been an opportunity for all community members to share their thoughts surrounding the recommended changes and to ask questions in regards to student experience.

The School is working on a well transitioned process to help students settle in quickly on arrival to campus and also to support them in the transition to life after graduation. This is being done with student contributions and feedback being an important aspect of the process. The School co-operates closely with relevant external agencies and consultants to provide guidance and support to vulnerable students. It continues to plan an extensive curriculum to enrich opportunities to develop students' positive attitudes to health and wellbeing.

There are six main focus areas and actions taken:

Holistic Pastoral Care & Support: A new whole school initiative

Pastoral care requirements are built into job descriptions for community members. There is ongoing professional development for faculty and staff in areas of safeguarding and pastoral care that has been led by external and internal experts.

Students take part in the life skills programme that also provides sessions on safeguarding and pastoral care for students to understand what is needed for a healthy lifestyle and to understand the support systems currently in place. Online programmes have also been introduced to support the use of data-informed support for students.

Behavioural Standards for Staff and Students: Challenging behaviours to create an inclusive and supportive community

New community agreements include strong mental health components, and guidance on implementation and mediation have been re-introduced. Ongoing open dialogue surrounding community agreements is taking place with the support of faculty and SNOW (the Student Council). The Leadership Team has provided guidance to faculty, staff and students with clear expectations and support for pastoral and safeguarding needs and acceptable behaviour. Low level behavior concerns are being followed up and recorded to assist in creating an inclusive and supportive environment.

Location and Physical Environment: Recognizing impact on mental health and well being

Many more excursions have been introduced for students to explore the local area. There are numerous outdoor education activities programmed throughout the year for students to try new activities ranging from kayaking to skiing and more. The school has made strong provisions for the development of students' spiritual, social and cultural awareness by giving opportunities to engage in a much larger number of activities.

Construction of the Creative Center and the Wellness Center will be completed by December 2023.

Leadership Programme: Young Leaders' Potential championed through adult and peer mentoring.

There has been an introduction of adult mentors within the Grade 10 leadership programme to support students in achieving strong leadership skills. The programme has been reinvisioned, taking advantage of strong, healthy student/staff relationships within a more clearly defined curriculum. The programme introduced is more personalized with individual coaching taking place. Psych-education workshops are now embedded into the curriculum to support students in their personal growth.

Residential Life: Enriched by increased engagement with staff and the external community

Residential Life provides clear leadership and programming that provides variety and access to all students. Students are supported in their living environment and additional personnel have been added to increase supervision and support. Students have been offered a platform to share their thoughts on future improvements.

The safety of students on campus continues to be a priority with fire alarms and security apparatus being updated where necessary to meet the requirements of a boarding school. Our external suppliers such as cleaners, bus drivers and caterers have all received updated safeguarding protocols to highlight that safeguarding is the responsibility of all our community members.

Sense of Community: Bridge cultural gaps across student cohorts

Residential Life has been utilized to bridge gaps between naturally forming groups of students. The clear expectation of faculty and staff to treat all students equally regardless of background and source of funding has been re-emphasized. Awareness raising has occurred in the considerable vulnerabilities that some students enter the school with, and clearer support networks for students to ask for assistance (e.g., English language proficiency, financial support) have been established. Ongoing community events allow for engagement and collaboration between students and faculty/staff.

Parent/guardian webinars and communication with student advisors continue to play a key role in building community and trusting relationships with our families.

Conclusion:

Pastoral care and safeguarding are the responsibility of all community members and we hope to keep both those on campus and our wider community across the world up to date with campus life. If you are a parent or guardian and have concerns about your own child or a friend of your child, please reach out to the faculty advisor and share your concerns so we can offer support and advice where necessary. If you have any concerns for a UWC ISAK Japan student please contact safeguarding@uwcisak.jp.

Please remember and note that we are still acting on the recommendations made to and by us, and we realize that this work, by its very nature, is never complete. This work is indeed the responsibility of all community members. Your assistance in this ongoing endeavor is most welcome. If you want to read the full pastoral report it can be accessed through the following link:

[Click here to view full pastoral report](#)