

ANU Student Incidents and Support Team

The Importance of Sleep for ANU Students

Internship available for Summer 2021

The Student Incidents and Support team provides a range of programs and services to enable students to develop and maintain their health and wellbeing whilst they learn and grow intellectually, socially and professionally during their time at ANU. We undertake a range of health promotion activities and provide resources that support help-seeking behaviours for all students. This work is informed by the Healthy University Strategy to promote various forms of health and help-seeking within our community. To achieve this, Student Incidents and Support works collaboratively across the University to inform, educate and support students to achieve personal, academic and professional success.

Project: The Importance of Sleep for ANU Students

Internship Details:

- Internship Availability: Summer 2021
- Internship Discipline: Science Communication, Science Communication Outreach, Psychology
- Internship Level: Undergraduate 2nd or 3rd year; Postgraduate coursework
- Available to International Students: Yes
- Preferred Project Skills:
 - Literature review
 - Data analysis
 - Writing and communication
 - Research including survey design and qualitative data analysis
- Clearances Required: No
- Host Supervisor:
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Summary:

Sleep insufficiency is often associated with the life of a university student, yet it is well known that inadequate sleep can have a negative impact on physical and mental health and be detrimental to cognitive skills for learning. In higher education students, sleep deficiency has been linked to risk-taking behaviours, depression, anxiety, decreased self-efficacy, substance misuse, excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption, and high rates of social media use. Insufficient sleep has also been shown to increase the long-term risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, and is increasingly connected with

neurodegenerative conditions such as dementia and Parkinson's disease¹. We need to develop a better understanding of the impact of poor sleep routines and sleep insufficiency on ANU students, as well as finding better ways to support students to understand the issues, impacts and strategies to create better health outcomes.

Anecdotally, through the work undertaken by ANU Thrive – a peer led initiative, we understand and hear from students that sleep insufficiency, exhaustion, susceptibility to illness and other negative impacts are being experienced by ANU students. We also hear that students do not necessarily associate their sleep patterns or sleep deprivation with these negative impacts and are not always willing to seek assistance or support.

ANU does not currently have data or a clear understanding of this issue on campus. We would like to gather data on students at ANU in order to properly understand the situation, ensure students have an understanding of the issues, strategies and support options available to them and implement appropriate new programs or support mechanisms as required. This would include getting an understanding of: the number of students impacted, demographics of those impacted; level of impact on wellbeing; reasons students' sleep is affected; and the impact of this insufficiency. This project would result in a written report with recommendations for future work plan in this area for the ANU, as well as the development of initial resources to support students and would require ethics approval to move forward.

There is an opportunity for an intern to support ANU in gathering and understanding this data to better support students. The intern will learn skills in developing and implementing a research based survey and other mechanisms for data collection; submit an ethics application; and translating data into both written and visual representation to provide a clear indication of the current situation on campus as well as potential support mechanisms.

This is an opportunity for a self-motivated student who can work independently, is passionate about helping others and has a keen understanding of data and research methods.

¹ Batten, R., Liddiard, K., Raynor, A. J., Brown, C. A., & Stanley, M. (2020). Cross-Sectional Survey of Sleep Practices of Australian University Students. *Nature and science of sleep*, 12, 39–48. <https://doi.org/10.2147/NSS.S221472>