



MentalHigh
Building Mental Health Capacity
at Higher Education Institutes in Southeast Asia

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Newsletter Volume 5

MentalHigh National conferences in Vietnam and Cambodia

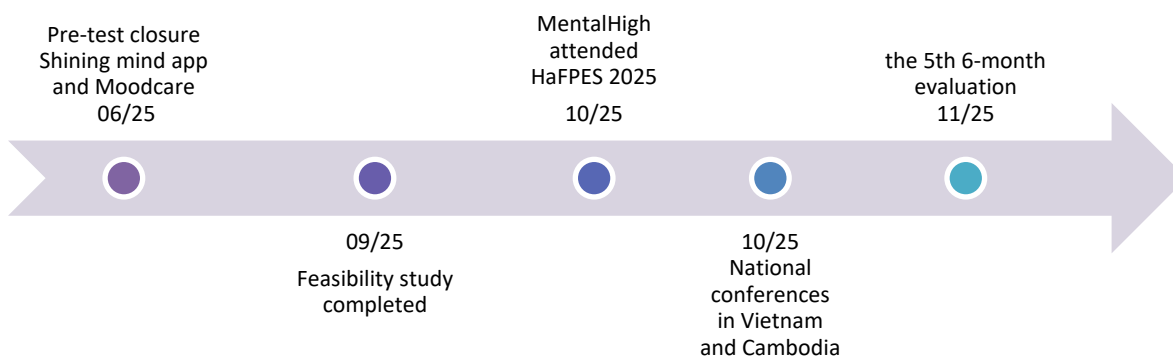


MentalHigh's National Conference in Vietnam

On October 23, 2025, MentalHigh consortium successfully held the national Conference “Building Mental Health Capacity at Higher Education Institutes in Southeast Asia” in Vietnam, hosted by Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration (TUEBA). The hybrid event drew more than 300 participants from partner universities in Europe and Southeast Asia. In his opening remarks, Dr. Do Dinh Long from TUEBA emphasized that strengthening comprehensive mental health capacity is essential for creating a safe, supportive, and human-centered university setting for the holistic

development of both students and staff. Alongside administrators and academics, the conference also included experts, psychologists, lecturers, staff, and students — demonstrating strong commitment across sectors to improving mental health in higher education. Presentations covered topics such as embedding mental health in university policy, launching digital platform MentalHigh.net, and sharing practical experiences from Vietnamese institutions. There were also a poster exhibition and hands-on experiences for the participants to try the app and digital course.

MentalHigh timeline over the last 6 months





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Continuing the success of the national conference in Vietnam, on 30 October 2025, the MentalHigh consortium held the MentalHigh National Conference on “Promoting Student Mental Health Through Innovation and Institutional Change”, in Cambodia, hosted by the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP).



MentalHigh's National Conference in RUPP, Cambodia

The conference was held in a hybrid format and brought together 163 participants, including 26 on campus and 137 online, from partner institutions in Cambodia, Vietnam, Germany, Finland, and Spain. Participants included university administrators, faculty, mental health professionals, and students.

Prof. Dr. Gunter Groen, the MentalHigh coordinator, opened the event with a keynote speech. This was followed by presentations of the MentalHigh Project's interventions: *Mentally Healthy Universities* by Dr. Astrid Jörns-Presentati and *MoodCare: Evaluating a Digital Platform for Students' Mental Health Support* by Dr. Azucena Garcia-Palacios, which introduced the Shining Mind app and the MoodCare course. Prof. Khann Sareth from RUPP detailed how the Shining Mind app offers students access to reliable mental health resources. Dr. Phoeun Bunna, a prominent clinical psychologist, discussed the gaps and outcomes in applying digital mental health in practice. Throughout the conference, participants emphasized the importance of building a compassionate, non-stigmatizing campus culture, where mental health is not just an add-on, but integral to the core institutional mission.

Capacity Building Workshops of MentalHigh: NIE, VUTED and VNUED

The Capacity Building Workshops (CBWs) are a core component of the MentalHigh Project, designed to strengthen mental health awareness, skills, and support systems within higher education institutions in Southeast Asia. Through interactive training sessions, expert-led discussions, and practical skill-building activities, the CBWs equip university staff, lecturers, and leaders with essential knowledge on mental health literacy, early identification of psychological challenges, and effective support strategies. These workshops not only enhance institutional capacity but also foster a more empathetic, inclusive, and mentally healthy academic environment across partner universities.

National Institute of Education (NIE), Cambodia

The National Institute of Education (NIE) successfully hosted its first Capacity Building Workshop on workplace mental health titled “**Prioritize Mental Health at the Workplace**”, with strong participation from the institute's leadership, department heads, teacher trainers, and postgraduate education managers. The session featured clinical psychologist Dr. Phoeun Bunna, who guided participants through discussions on stress, workplace mental health dynamics, and the importance of institutional support. The workshop highlighted NIE's commitment to fostering a caring and psychologically safe environment for both staff and trainees.



Sharing at the CBW “Prioritize Mental Health at the Workplace” in NIE



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Vinh University of Technology Education (VUTED), Vietnam



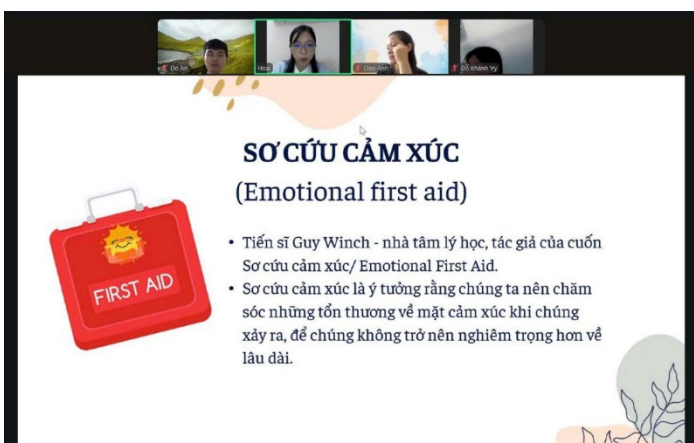
Group photo of all participants at the CBW “Empowering Staff to Support Students in Managing Stress” in VUTED

VUTED launched its CBW series to foster a supportive campus culture and reduce stigma in both academic and support contexts. The first workshop, “Identifying and Reducing Stigma in Staff–Student Interactions,” facilitated by Ms. Pham Thi Ngoc Lan, encouraged lecturers and student support staff to reflect on stigma related to academic performance, regional background, gender identity, and mental health, while generating practical solutions such as inclusive communication, non-discriminatory staff training, and enhanced peer-support activities. The second CBW, “Empowering Staff to Support Students in Managing Stress,” addressed key stressors—including academic overload,

adaptation difficulties, financial pressures, and social media influences—and proposed actions like stress-management training, stronger academic advisor roles, and dedicated counseling support. Building on these efforts, the third workshop, “Enhancing Mental Health Support Capacity for University Staff,” led by Ms. Cao Thi Huong, showcased MentalHigh project achievements, emphasized early mental health intervention, and reinforced the vital role of university staff in creating a stigma-free environment. Collectively, the three workshops strengthened VUTED’s commitment to a student-centered, inclusive, and empathetic educational community.

VNU University of Education (VNU-Ed), Vietnam

The first CBW at VNU-Ed named “**Inside Out – Emotional Pieces**” created a reflective and emotionally safe space for students, staff, and lecturers to deepen their understanding of emotions. Led by M.A. Duong Thi Hoai, the workshop explored emotional awareness, emotional “first aid,” and strategies for recognizing and regulating feelings. Participants engaged in heartfelt sharing, acknowledging how past emotional experiences shape present behaviors. This session played an important role in reducing stigma around emotional vulnerability within the university community. The workshop ended with a renewed sense of compassion and mindfulness, encouraging participants to treat their emotions with understanding and care. It also marked VNU-Ed’s meaningful contribution to the MentalHigh initiative, reinforcing the importance of well-being in academic life.



Online sharing of CBW “Inside Out – Emotional Pieces” at VNU-Ed, Vietnam



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MentalHigh Project Featured at European Implementation Event 2025



MentalHigh's WP3 lead, Azucena Garcia, presented a poster titled *"Cultural Adaptation of a Digital Intervention for Mental Health Promotion in Southeast Asia within the MentalHigh Project"* at the European Implementation Event 2025, held in Newcastle, UK, from June 4–6.

Organized by the European Implementation Collaborative (EIC), the event brought together experts from across Europe to share insights on improving implementation practices in health and social care. The MentalHigh poster was part of the "Promise, Progress, Problems" session, which spotlighted innovative projects making strides in their implementation journey. The poster received encouraging feedback from attendees and is now available for viewing on the MentalHigh website under the Results & Publications section.

MentalHigh Coordinator Prof. Dr. Gunter Groen Presents at Hanoi Forum 2025

Prof. Dr. Gunter Groen, coordinator of the MentalHigh Project delivered a presentation at the 5th Hanoi Forum on Pedagogical and Educational Science (HaFPES 2025) on Friday, October 3, 2025. The forum was organized by the Vietnam National University – University of Education (VNU-UED) and held at the National Convention Center in Hanoi.

His presentation was part of Panel 4: Neuroscience, Education, and Well-Being: Interdisciplinary Dialogue, which brought together international experts and educators to discuss innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to mental health and education.

In his talk titled *"MentalHigh: Promoting Student Wellbeing in Southeast Asia,"* Prof. Groen presented our project's goals and key achievements in promoting mental health awareness and student well-being across universities in Europe and Southeast Asia. The presentation was well received and marked a successful contribution to the forum's dialogue on advancing mental health in higher education.





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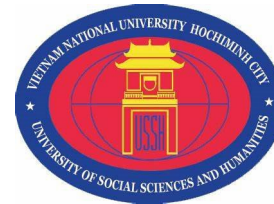


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Project Partners

- Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (Project coordinator)
- VNU University of Education, Vietnam
- Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Universitat Jaume I, Spain
- VNUHCM University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam
- Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam
- Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration, Vietnam
- Vinh University of Technology Education, Vietnam
- Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- National Institute of Education, Cambodia



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National Institute of Education

Contact Details

For further information or media inquiries, please contact: <https://mentalhigh.net/>