BetterU Newsroom: Student Placement & Volunteer Guide

1. Welcome to the BetterU Newsroom

Welcome to the BetterU Newsroom! My name is Gareth and I am one of BetterU team. We're thrilled to have you on board, whether you are joining us as a student on placement or as a volunteer.

You are joining a significant and evolving wellbeing initiative at Flinders University, and your contribution will be a core part of shaping its future and making a real difference in the lives of our students.

This guide will provide you with an overview of BetterU (https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru), our guiding philosophy, and the practical details of your role on the team.

2. The Story of BetterU

The origins of BetterU stretch back to 2017 when I created the Student Health and Wellbeing Blog (https://blogs.flinders.edu.au/student-health-and-well-being/). Over the years, that blog became a primary channel for sharing student wellbeing information at Flinders, and we have published over 1600 articles and posts to date. The WordPress infrastructure that powers the blog is the same one that powers much of the content on BetterU today.

A significant turning point came in early 2025. BetterU was launched as a new identity to both continue the work of the blog AND serve as a gateway to the many wellbeing supports at Flinders, including services, facilities, programs, and resources. This initiative was driven by the university's Wellbeing Working Group (WWG), which formed in 2022 as part of the Whole of University Wellbeing Strategic Plan. The WWG is still active, and as part of your role, you may be invited to attend its meetings and may be involved in other activities it initiates.

3. Our Purpose and Focus

In 2026, BetterU is evolving. For a long time, we operated primarily as a news service, letting students know about the services, programs and resources available to them for their wellbeing. We don't want to stop doing but we do want to enhance that mission now by making BetterU feel more like something that is owned by the community at Flinders.

We think of BetterU as doing three specific jobs. When you create content for us, you are helping us do one of these three things:

1. **The Activator (Helping students *do* something):** We don't just want students to read; we want them to act. Whether it's a tip on better sleep or a guide to beating procrastination, our content is designed to help students try new things and build healthy habits.

https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru

2. **The Navigator (Helping students *find* something):** The university (and wider community) support system can be confusing. We act as a bridge. We help students find the right services, programs and resources for their needs - whether that's a self-help guide, a workshop, an app, an internal or external referral or something else.

3. **The Forum (Helping students *connect*):** You are the expert on what it feels like to be a student in 2026. We want BetterU to be a place where students share their stories and wisdom, so nobody feels like they are doing this degree alone.

The Four Pillars of Wellbeing

You can read about how we understand the term wellbeing here: https://blogs.flinders.edu.au/student-health-and-well-being/2025/02/25/what-do-we-mean-by-wellbeing-a-first-crack-at-the-question/

In short, we take a holistic view of wellbeing, meaning that wellbeing is doing well across a number different interconnected domains of life.

- **Body:** Looking after your physical health.

- **Mind:** Looking after your mental health.

- **Spirit:** Finding a sense of meaning, purpose, and values.

- **Together:** Building connection, community, and belonging.

Wellbeing is a desired goal in itself (e.g. people like to feel physically healthy) as well as being a condition that supports people moving towards their goals, such as getting a degree or starting a new career.

To work on one's wellbeing therefore means making tangible investments in one or more of these areas so that we feel good and are moving in the direction we want.

Why we need you (The Shift to Student Co-designed)

For a long time, I (Gareth) wrote almost everything on the site with support from some of my colleagues. Being a psychologist, it has meant that most of the content has focused on the 'mind' domain and has often been more clinical in nature. And whilst I did do a degree at university (in fact, I studied at Flinders), it has been a long time since I was a student so I can't really speak to the modern *student experience*.

Hence why we are shifting to a "Student Co-designed" newsroom because your voice matters. You understand the pressure of assignments, the cost of living, and the reality of campus life better than any staff member.

By joining this team, you are helping us combine clinical expertise with peer wisdom.

4. Your Role on the Team

Your Primary Task

Your main daily task is to populate BetterU with content.

Since 2017, we've been creating content (primarily articles) and making it available online for students - https://blogs.flinders.edu.au/student-health-and-well-being/

You'll be joining a growing list of students who, over the years, have done some of that content creation for us.

[You can read the content created by the last group of students here: https://blogs.flinders.edu.au/student-health-and-well-being/2025/12/11/celebrating-our-first-betteru-student-contributors/]

You can devise the content yourself (with guidance), use our *Content Creator Playbook* to help you, or be allocated content creation tasks.

The content we create is intended to help us achieve our three stated purposes:

1. **The Activator:** Creating content that helps students *do* something (e.g., a "How-to" guide for sleep).

2. **The Navigator:** Guiding students to the right service (e.g., writing a user guide for Oasis).

3. **The Forum:** Sharing stories or peer wisdom so students feel connected (e.g., an interview with a peer).

Learn and Share Mindset

Your primary role on this team is not just to be a "content producer"; it is to be a learner.

We know that joining a newsroom can feel daunting, especially if you don't feel like a wellbeing expert yet. The good news is: you aren't expected to be an expert.

Instead, the expectation is that you will use this placement to learn about how to look after people's wellbeing (e.g., by reading research, talking to service providers, or doing a wellbeing program) and then share what you've learned through the content you create.

This produces two outcomes:

1. **You help other students:** By translating complex info into something relatable.

2. **You build your own toolkit:** The knowledge you gain stays with you for your future career.

Related Opportunities (Level Up)

While content creation is the foundation, you can also contribute to broader projects. As you build confidence, you might choose to take on a project that is less about specific content and more about the promotion and development of BetterU.

Some examples of how you might expand your role include:

- **Campaigns & Resources:** Taking a topic and turning it into a tangible product, like a curriculum slide deck for a lecturer or a social media video series.

- **Reach & Awareness:** Helping us get seen. This might involve giving brief 5-minute "intro talks" about BetterU at the start of lectures or connecting with student clubs.

- **Strategy & Legacy:** Helping us improve the unit itself. This could involve running a student feedback session ("Brains Trust") or auditing our content to ensure we are including diverse voices.

https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru

5. The Content Process

How we turn ideas into interventions.

The Tool: The Creator's Playbook

Students vary in their confidence and comfort in creating content. Some are able to get started with relatively little initial support. Some need more structure to get going.

For those that need a little structure, we have developed a specific tool called the **Content Creator Playbook**. You will be given access to this when you start your placement or volunteering role.

You can use this document throughout your placement to help you:

1. Select topics based on student data.

2. Choose the complexity level of the content you create (the Levels System).

3. Design your content using the "Mini-Intervention" principles.

4. Use good storytelling templates to structure more personal content.

Our Content Principles

Broadly speaking, everything we publish aims to hit four marks:

- **Actionable:** It doesn't just describe a problem; it provides a clear step or strategy to solve it.

- **Personalised:** Drawing on your own experiences as a student and in life more generally. The content feels like a person wrote it.

- **Evidence-Based:** It is grounded in research, reliable sources, or safe lived experience.

- **Relatable:** It speaks to the specific reality of being a Flinders student.

Be a Journalist (The "Navigator" Role)

While many articles will be able to be written from your desk (e.g. reporting on a piece of research), a powerful way to generate content is to immerse yourself in the university's wellbeing landscape. We encourage you to act like a journalist on a beat: get out into the community to participate in and observe events firsthand. This is how you'll find the most compelling and relatable stories. This could involve:

- Attending celebrations and activities during key events like Wellbeing Week or R U OK? Day.

- Participating in a workshop run by Oasis, HCDS, or another group to experience it yourself.

- Spending time at the Oasis Student Wellbeing Centre to capture the atmosphere and talk to students about what the space means to them.

- Interviewing students, event organisers, or service providers to get different perspectives on a wellbeing topic.

Your firsthand experiences and the stories you gather from the community will make your content more authentic and impactful for your fellow students.

[note: whilst on placement, you may be allocated by me (Gareth) to a specific event to report back on it]

https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru

AI Use Policy: The "Co-Pilot" Rule

You are welcome to use AI tools (like Copilot ChatGPT) to improve your structure, grammar, or brainstorming. **However, AI cannot do the learning for you.**

Because our philosophy is you learn by teaching, the core research and synthesis must be yours.

- **OK:** Using AI to suggest headlines, critique a draft, or summarize a long paper you have already read.

- **NOT OK:** Asking AI to "Write an article about resilience" without you doing the underlying research.

- *Requirement:* You must add a personal touch (a story, an opinion, a specific Flinders context) that ensures the content feels human.

Other stuff to know....

- **Support:** All content will be screened before posting. You will receive assistance and editing from me (Gareth). You are also encouraged to engage with other students on placement to test and review your content.

- **Authorship:** You will be noted as an author of everything that you create.

A Special Project Idea

We are always looking for new ways to reach students. A great project would be for you to create wellbeing-focused content to be featured in the *Empire Times*, the Flinders student magazine or distributed via other student channels like Flinders social media accounts and *Ping!*

https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru

6. Work Arrangements & Supervision

[this is primarily for students on formal placements. But students who are volunteering are welcome to join the team meetings, Microsoft Teams site and professional development sessions]

Location & Hours

We do not have a dedicated office space, so you will be working remotely.

- **Find spaces you like to work:** Producing content requires significant computer work time (e.g. writing, editing, planning, etc). So find or create a place (or places) that are nice to do this focused work.

- **Fulfilling Your Hours:** You are expected to complete your designated placement hours each week, but you are able to decide how those hours are allocated over the week. Much like how a freelancer would need to complete their contracted hours but has some flexibility in how that is done.

- **Output vs. Time:** We do not monitor your hours. Instead, we work on a trust system that you are completing the necessary hours and monitor whether your output and engagement are appropriate for the time allocated. For example, if you are doing "Level 1" tasks, we would expect to see at least 3-4 pieces of content produced over the course of a semester placement (two days per week). If you produce nothing for two weeks, we will assume you aren't doing your hours.

Professional Expectations

Remote work requires a high level of self-discipline. It is easy to put stuff off because you aren't required to be at a certain place at a certain time. So, you will need to structure your work week, set aside dedicated time and be responsive to communications via the Microsoft Teams site and email (see communications channels).

- **Active Time Management:** Set aside dedicated blocks of time during the week for the BetterU placement. Don't try to squeeze the work in at the last minute before something is due.

- **Proactive Communication:** We understand that challenges arise. If you are sick, facing personal difficulties, or struggling to manage the workload, it is your responsibility to communicate this proactively with me (Gareth) and your university placement supervisor. We can't provide support or adjust expectations if we don't know what's happening. You do not need to share sensitive personal information. Only that you are 'dealing with a personal issue' and what you might need from us.

Supervision

The BetterU News Team (whoever that includes at the time) meets weekly online to share updates and progress. In addition, you can request additional individual supervision sessions to work through more challenging difficulties or content.

Communication Channels

- **Microsoft Teams:** The BetterU News Team has a Microsoft Teams site through which much of the communication for the team takes place. You can also reach me via Teams chat or email for ad-hoc support.
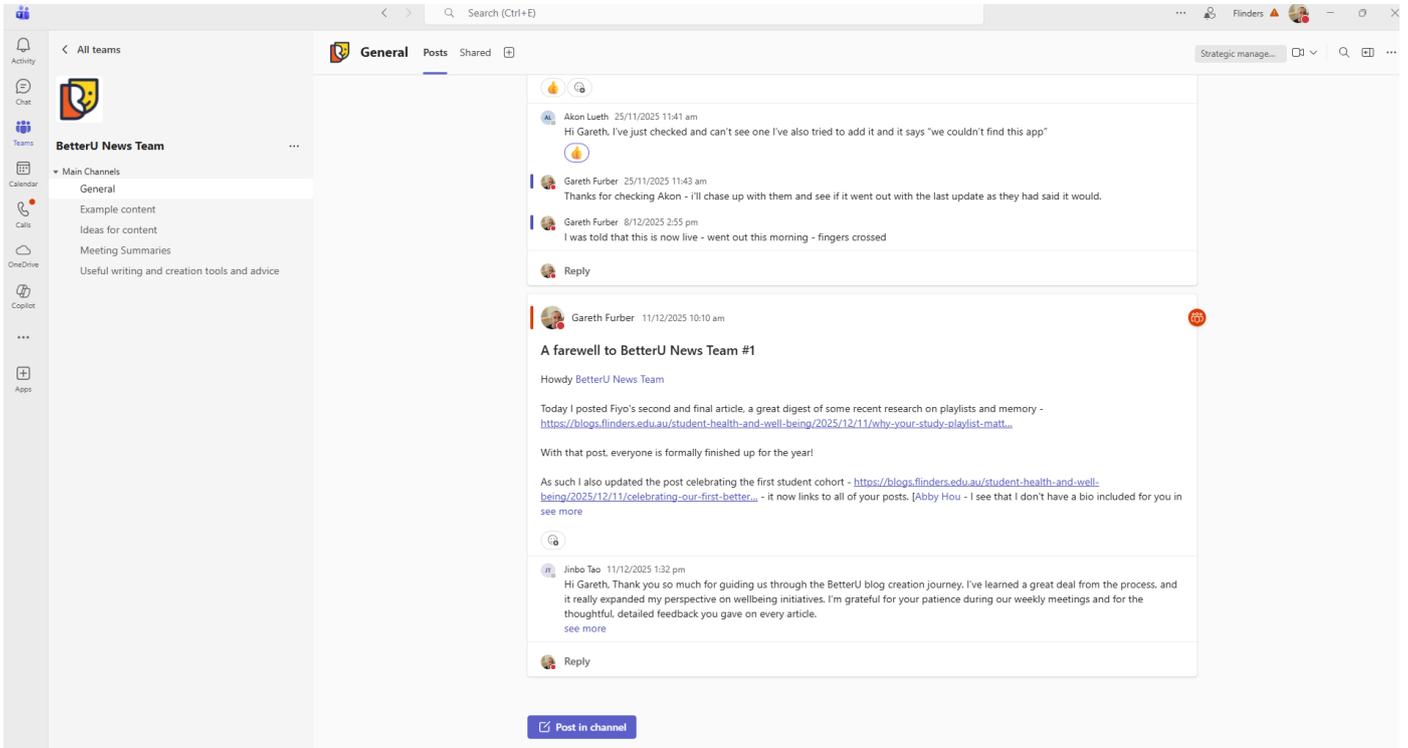
- **Email:** Use email for formal matters regarding your placement (e.g., adjustments, absences), to send me content or where you'd like the keep the content private.

Induction

There will be a formal induction session in which I cover the history and goals of BetterU, the details of the placement and give guidance on how to get started on creating content.

https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru

7. Your Professional Development: Mental Health & Self-Care

This placement is designed to be a rich learning experience, and your professional development is a key priority.

As part of your role, I (Gareth) will endeavour to provide dedicated sessions on my broad, holistic approach to mental health and the evidence-based strategies we can use to look after it. We will also devote specific time to exploring the principles and practices of **professional self-care**.

The goal is twofold. My hope is that you will learn valuable knowledge and skills for your **own self-care** and wellbeing during your time at university. Furthermore, the strategies we discuss are designed to be directly applicable to your future professional lives, providing you with practical tools you can carry into **clinical or other professional settings**.

8. Your First Steps

As noted, there will be an induction session in which there will be guidance on how to get started and you will be provided with some additional documentation such as the Content Creator Playbook.

But if you want to get started now, here are some useful first steps:

a) **Visit the BetterU site and have a look around** - https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru Engage with the content with a critical eye. Ask yourself: How can we improve it? What do you like? What do you not like? What's missing?

b) **Familiarise yourself with the wellbeing services at Flinders.** Explore the websites for BetterU, Health, Counselling and Disability Services (HCDS), and Oasis. The better you understand the system, the better you can communicate about it. It will be assumed that you have explored these sites and have a basic understanding of what is on them.

- https://www.flinders.edu.au/betteru
- https://students.flinders.edu.au/support/hcd
- https://oasis.flinders.edu.au/
- https://linktr.ee/FlindersWellbeing

9. A Final Welcome

Once again, welcome to the team. I look forward to working with you and seeing the fantastic contributions you will make to student wellbeing at Flinders. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

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