

PHQ-4: Validated Screening Tool for Anxiety and Depression

In 2022, mental health items were included in the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), four of which were validated screening questions for anxiety and depression (Table 1). These items were introduced to understand students' wellbeing after the pandemic. In 2023, the same screening items were adopted for the UC Graduate Experience Survey (UCGSES).

Table 1. PHQ-4 items and coding

Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all	Several days	More than half of the days	Nearly every day	
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	0	1	2	3	Anxiety subscales
Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3	
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3	Depression subscales
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3	

Source: <https://www.reviva.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Ultrabrief-PHQ-4-2009.pdf>

The following shows how to calculate the PHQ-4 scores and define anxiety and depression.

Add up the scores for all items. The total score ranges from 0 to 12, with categories of psychological distress as follows:

- None: 0-2
- Mild: 3-5
- Moderate: 6-8
- Severe: 9-12

Anxiety subscale = sum of items 1 and 2 (score range: 0 to 6)

Depression subscale = sum of items 3 and 4 (score range: 0 to 6)

On each subscale, a score of 3 or greater is considered positive for screening purposes.