



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

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Background

- 1 The policy sets out our commitment of promoting a progressive, engaging and healthy working environment which is supportive to both our employees and the student experience. It will encourage employees to achieve a healthy work life balance and enable them to gain access to appropriate support and opportunities when experiencing the effects of physical or mental health conditions. We are committed to being a Mindful Employer.
- 2 Whilst exercising its duty of care towards employees, managers should be enabling and empowering people to take more personal responsibility for their lifestyle choices, health and wellbeing. The University would like employees to be fit and healthy and to have a good work life balance.
- 3 The University offers a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits and will encourage staff to make a positive difference to the environment and community. Studies show that by doing any one of the [**five ways to wellbeing**](#) it will make a difference and be a positive impact on an individuals daily life.

Purpose Statement

- 4 The aim of this policy is to describe the University's commitment to the wellbeing of our employees in its broadest sense and setting out how we will fulfil the legal obligations. We will draw on resources and ideas by promoting the use of the *Five ways to wellbeing model* introduced by the New Economics Foundation, however there are different types of tools available for wellbeing.
- 5 The University recognises that wellbeing and performance are linked and improving an employees' ability to handle pressure and to balance work and home life will ultimately lead to improvements in individuals and organisational performance.
- 6 The purpose of this policy is to:
 - Raise awareness and provide guidance on issues relating to health and wellbeing in recognition of the University's role in improving staffs health;
 - Encourage the adoption of a proactive approach to prevent and minimise the risks associated with poor health and wellbeing within the workforce;
 - Help promote a culture of health within the University using the '*Five Ways to Wellbeing*' which is an example of one tool
 - Create a supportive environment that enables employees to be proactive in supporting their own health and wellbeing;
 - Support an improvement in the engagement score for Health and wellbeing in the Staff Survey.

Legal obligations

- 7 The University has a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure so far as is reasonably practical the health, safety and welfare of its employees and those who may be affected by University operations. This extends to taking reasonable care to ensure that health is not put at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress from work activities i.e. to treat workplace stress like any other health hazard. Additional responsibilities are outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

Commitment Statement

- 8 The University will provide:
- A safe and healthy working environment.
 - Access to Occupational Health Advice and medical referrals where required.
 - Health surveillance for those employees working with hazardous substances and noisy environments.
 - Access to a confidential counselling service for employees for either work or personal issues.
 - Health promotion information resources and activities.
 - Health and wellbeing information on the intranet for employees
 - Specific training for all managers on preventing, recognising and managing cases of stress.
 - Information and training to enable employees to develop their skills and experience and maximise their contribution to the University.

Applicability and Scope

- 9 This policy applies to all employees and workers in the University.
- 10 Our employee wellbeing policy should be read in conjunction with policies and procedures covering attendance and health, including policies on work-life balance, special leave, flexible working, managing sickness absence policy, dignity at work (bullying and harassment), equal opportunities and staff learning and development.
- 11 Line managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health must ensure that personal data, including information about individuals' health, is handled in accordance with the University's data protection policy / policy on processing special categories of personal data.

Definitions

- 12 **Mental Health** is defined by the World Health Organisation as a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community. In the WHO's constitution it is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
- 13 **Mindful Employer** is about increasing awareness of mental health, helping the University deliver its business, providing supporting networks and information, and making it healthier to talk about mental health in the workplace.
- 14 **Five Ways to Wellbeing** was developed by the New Economics Foundation as part of the government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. These are five things that we can all do every day to improve the way we feel although by doing one thing you can make a difference to your wellbeing. These are Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give. Further explanations about the five ways and examples of how to apply these are available in the Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing via the intranet.

Responsibilities

- 15 **The University Executive Team** is responsible for providing leadership and promoting an understanding of the positive link between staff health, wellbeing and organisational resilience in order to provide the best student experience:
 - To lead by example and encourage staff to take up the health and wellbeing initiatives and tools offered in the University and to promote five ways to wellbeing;
 - Viewing health and wellbeing as part of the culture of a caring and supportive employer;
 - Have a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
 - The University will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.
- 16 **Heads of School/Directors/Managers** are responsible for ensuring and safeguarding the health and wellbeing of their staff and encouraging regular reviews of workload in order to maintain a healthy balance.
 - To lead by example and encourage staff in their School/Directorate to take up Health and Wellbeing initiatives and tools in the University and to promote five ways to wellbeing;
 - Ensuring that any stress related absence is dealt with under the Sickness Absence policy;
 - Making reasonable adjustments in the workplace following advice from Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service in line with the Equality Act 2010;
 - Supporting staff and following up on the advice once they have attended occupational health as appropriate, giving them time to attend and ensuring they attend;

- To ensure that bullying and harassment is dealt with as defined under the Dignity at work Policy (incorporating Bullying & Harassment Policy & Procedures);
 - To ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities through the Professional Development Review (PDR) process;
 - Be vigilant and offer additional support to an employee experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation and approach HR for further guidance where appropriate;
 - Implementing the findings of any risk assessment undertaken in conjunction with the employee.
- 17 **Employees** need to take personal responsibility for their health, wellbeing and lifestyle choices and report any concerns regarding stress to their line manager:
- Applying the principles of health and wellbeing at work and have an awareness of in the ‘Five ways to wellbeing’ tool;
 - Liaising with their line manager, Human Resources or the employee assistance programme helpline if they need to communicate or seek support with health or any wellbeing issues;
 - For attending appointments and are encouraged to engage in the University’s wellbeing initiatives on offer to help support develop individual resilience;
 - Implementing the findings of any risk assessment undertaken in conjunction with their line manager.
- 18 **Human Resources** is primarily to give guidance to managers and staff on the Health and Wellbeing policy and procedures.
- In conjunction with the Health and Safety Manager, the designated HR Business Partner (Schools / Directorates) will monitor the effectiveness of the Health and Wellbeing policy and procedure by collating sickness absence statistics and other key KPIs;
 - Incorporating health and wellbeing within human resources policies and promote the five ways to wellbeing;
 - Promoting an understanding of the positive link between staff health and wellbeing and the quality of providing the best student experience;
 - The HR Business Partner will also ensure that where appropriate employees are referred to the Occupational Health Service;
- 19 **Health and Safety Committee** provide a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented. The Committee oversees the monitoring of the policy and other measures to reduce work-related stress and promote workplace health and safety.
- 20 **Safety representatives** consult with employees on the issue of work-related stress and conduct joint inspections of the workplace to ensure that environmental causes of stress are properly addressed.

21 **Health and Wellbeing working group** is involved in:

- Driving the take up and awareness of the Bucks offer to our staff.
- Promoting and campaigning to improve the take up of and improve health and wellbeing opportunities in the University and five ways to wellbeing.
- Supporting the development of Health and Wellbeing pages once the intranet is in place.
- Encouraging employee champions to promote Health and Wellbeing in their Schools / Directorates.
- Promoting the benefits of the Staff Association to create a more positive climate for promoting Health and Wellbeing and increase the range of social activities to all.
- Aligning with the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy to work more closely with the Students Union and our local community, for example; through volunteering opportunities, working with local school around the reading project.
- Explore and find ways to maximise the Human Performance Lab, for example session on nutrition, health checks, health MOTs, using the sports therapy team and attracting the community and creating partnerships.

22 **Trade Unions** are available to provide advice and support to members of staff on health and wellbeing issues and to promote health and wellbeing in the University and in accordance with the Unions best practice..

23 **Occupational Health** will provide specialist advice to the University in relation to individual medical issues, particularly where they may impact upon the work of the individual. This will include:

- Supporting individuals who have been off sick with stress and to advise them and their managers on a planned return to work and in the case of disability, the introduction of reasonable adjustments.

24 **Students' Union** working in close partnership with the university and to encourage our staff to support student activities, such as RAG week, health and wellbeing initiatives.

Managing stress in the workplace

- 25 Stress is what can be experienced when individuals feel unable to cope with the pressures and demands placed upon them. We can recognise that certain events will cause stress for many people. Some of these events are linked to daily lives in or out of work, some to the workplace and some to the actual job role.
- 26 Stress can come from any direction, and sometimes from several sources at once. It is important to recognise that it is how individuals react that causes stress, as well as the actual event itself. These reactions can be quite different between people experiencing the same event. *For example, one person may thrive on deadlines as it gives them something to aim at and helps order their work – another may find them imposing or even threatening.*
- 27 There are three areas to monitor – physical, behavioural and emotional issues. These often overlap, but we can put symptoms into these categories. The list outlined in the **Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing** available via the intranet is not exhaustive, but does cover many of the common symptoms we can see in employees as reactions to stress.
- 28 Further details can be found in the **Guidance on Managing Health and Wellbeing** available via the intranet where it details the guidance for monitoring stress, undertaking a workplace risk assessment and action plan and additionally, a workplace risk assessment for the department.

Work Related Stress Risk assessment and action plan

- 29 There is a legal requirement to assess the nature and scale of risk to the health of employees in order to take the appropriate preventative and proactive steps. The Work related stress risk assessment (WRS) and action plan is in the **Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing which** is available via the Health and Wellbeing pages on the intranet should be used as a tool to identify the triggers and potential stress factors.
- 30 The WRS Risk assessment should be completed and implemented by the individual and line manager (or another manager who has not previously been involved with the matter) before the individual returns to work. Reference should be made to the University's Managing Sickness Absence policy and can be found [here](#). It may also be necessary to invite a HR Business Partner and Trade Union representative, if the individual feels that this is appropriate. Once the potential stress triggers have been identified, it is then necessary to assign actions which will endeavour to eliminate or minimise the 'stressors', these arrangements should be agreed by all parties with realistic timescales and subject to regular review.

Managing and Minimising cases of Work Related Stress

- 31 The University WRS Risk assessment is available in the **Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing** is available via the Health and Wellbeing pages on the intranet can be used to identify a number of potential factors that may trigger stress. It is

important for managers to understand how these factors impact the working environment, University culture and employees' wellbeing. An example of a University WRS Risk Assessment can be found in the Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing available via the intranet.

- 32 Managers should be aware of any changes which may be introduced into the team which may affect employees. This could be the introduction of new processes or tasks, a reduction in employees' hours which in turn have implications for remaining employees and increased workload. Other triggers may include changes to existing employees' responsibilities or interpersonal relationships within teams or cross Departments or Campuses.
- 33 Where symptoms of stress are identified by the Line Manager, other team members or raised by the individual concerned, the Manager should meet with the individual (See the **Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing** which is available via the Health and Wellbeing pages on the intranet) to discuss the potential triggers and what can be reasonably implemented to try and reduce any work related stressors and/or cope with the effects of personal/home life related issues.
- 34 Where employees have been absent from work owing to a stress related illness, a return to work plan should be agreed between the individual concerned, the Line Manager and the HR Business Partner. The return to work may be phased and increased over a period of time and may be with additional measures in place as identified via the Individual WRS Risk Assessment which can be found in the **Guidance for Managing Health and Wellbeing** is available via the Health and Wellbeing pages on the intranet.

Health Promotion

- 35 The University will provide information and updates from the work of charities and organisations which promote healthy lifestyle choices and promote initiatives where appropriate. Further details can be found in Guidance on Managing Health and Wellbeing via the intranet.

Monitoring

- 36 HR will monitor the implementation of this policy and provide data as part of their normal equality reporting to the University Executive Team, LJC and the Resourcing Committee.