

## Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy

### 1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy describes the University's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of its employees. The University is committed to providing a working environment which promotes positive wellbeing and minimises risk to physical and mental health, thereby creating and sustaining a culture where all students and staff can thrive and succeed to their best potential.
- 1.2 The policy sets out how the University meets its legal obligations, the responsibilities of different staff groups, functions and specialists within Sussex, and identifies the ways in which employees must be supported to realise and maintain their mental health and wellbeing.
- 1.3 Research<sup>1</sup> shows clear links between promoting and supporting wellbeing and mental health at work (defined in section 2.2) and the ability of individuals and organisations to flourish.

### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The policy covers wellbeing and mental health and applies to all staff at Sussex in their work for the University, both on or off campus. Policies relating to wellbeing and mental health of undergraduate and postgraduate students are the responsibility of the Division of Student Experience; the policy recognises that some students are also staff and are supported across both Divisions. For the purposes of this policy, "all staff" includes the following, whether remunerated or not:
- Senior managers, officers, and directors;
  - Employees (whether permanent, fixed-term, temporary, or casual);
  - Contract, seconded, and agency staff;
  - Volunteers, apprentices, and interns; and
  - Others associated with (i.e. performing services for or on behalf of) the University (for example, agents and consultants).
- 2.2 For the purposes of this policy, the University uses the following definitions for 'wellbeing' and 'mental health.'
- 2.2.1 As defined by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, wellbeing is understood as *"The creation of an environment that promotes a state of contentment which allows employees to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of them and the organisation."*
- 2.2.2 As defined by The World Health Organisation, mental health is understood as follows: *"Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community."*

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<sup>1</sup> [Thriving at Work. Mentally Healthy Universities](#)

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- 2.3 The University is committed to the wellbeing and mental health of its whole community. This staff policy aligns to student wellbeing and mental health policy to ensure consistency.
- 2.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures linked to wellbeing and mental health, including dignity and respect, flexible working, sickness absence, equality and diversity and stress management (a full list is provided at the end of the document).

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 3.1 The University / University Committees

- 3.1.1 The University has a legal duty of care to employees to protect their health at work, as set out in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy. The University supports and promotes wellbeing and mental health and where staff experience challenges caused by work, will endeavour to remedy this wherever possible. The University also has a duty of care for those who bring challenges to work that have been triggered elsewhere.
- 3.1.2 The University's Health and Safety Committee reviews the operation of health and safety documents annually.
- 3.1.3 The People, Culture and Inclusion Committee is responsible for monitoring the effective implementation of this policy and suggesting related actions, based on a review of data provided by HR in relation to trends in case data (including stress and dignity and respect) and staff survey outcomes.

#### 3.2 Leaders and managers at all levels

- 3.2.1 The University expects and supports leaders and managers at all levels at Sussex to:
- Put into practice and role model the principles contained in this policy, creating an open and inclusive environment in which helpful and sensitive conversations about wellbeing and mental health are part of the way we all think and work;
  - Complete mandated learning on responsibility for, and best practice approaches to, supporting and promoting staff wellbeing and mental health;
  - Appreciate and respect the diverse needs and experiences of University staff in relation to wellbeing and mental health;
  - Recognise that mental health has a strong equality dimension and that there are intersectionality issues, which means that staff have different needs with regard to mental health
  - Consider the impact of workload on wellbeing and mental health when agreeing group and individual goals;
  - Keep in frequent contact with all team/group members and ensure that attention is given to wellbeing and mental health in these conversations in order to promote self-care and prevention, noting any emerging trends in health, discussing with the individual and asking for professional guidance as needed;
  - Undertake return to work conversations which should be documented, followed up with agreed action and reviewed as part of routine one to one discussions;
  - Recognise that, for many staff, their definition of their current state of wellbeing and mental health will fluctuate between conversations;

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- Seek support and advice from HR and take appropriate action when an individual is struggling or ill;
- Acknowledge that organisational change or emerging priorities may conflict with the wellbeing and mental health needs of an individual or group and work with those individuals and groups to understand and mitigate impact where possible, including undertaking equality assessments; and
- Adopt behaviours so as to reduce the likelihood of negatively impacting the wellbeing and mental health of staff

### 3.3 Human Resources

3.3.1 The University's Human Resources (HR) Division is responsible for:

- Developing organisation-wide policies and procedures and implementing measures that support and promote the good mental health and wellbeing of employees;
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for collecting qualitative and quantitative data on wellbeing and mental health (e.g. staff surveys, dignity and respect breaches), setting targets for improvement and reporting to relevant committees;
- Maintaining and developing its professional expertise in advising on wellbeing and mental health at work;
- Liaising with support professionals (e.g. Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Programme, Safety, Sussex Sport), with the object of ensuring the quality of provision that helps employees maintain and improve physical and mental health;
- Fostering a mentally healthy culture by incorporating these principles into manager training and working with staff networks to run regular initiatives that raise awareness of mental health issues at work; and
- Working with staff networks to create, maintain and promote clear and accessible materials on a website hub on matters relating to wellbeing and mental health.

### 3.6 All Staff

3.6.1 All staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and adhering to the principles contained within it with regard to both their own mental health and wellbeing at work as well as looking out for the wellbeing and mental health of others (e.g. colleagues and students).

3.6.2 All staff are expected to do what they can to manage their own wellbeing and mental health and to seek support when needed, including identifying adjustments to support a return to work.

3.6.3 All staff must handle personal data in accordance with data protection policy; this includes confidentiality with regard to any personal disclosures made to them about mental health or wellbeing matters, unless there is risk of harm to self or others, in which case HR should be contacted in working hours and the emergency services out of hours.

## 4. POLICY

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4.1 The University promotes the health and wellbeing of staff through its management policies and practice, support services, information and advice, and wellbeing and mental health promotion campaigns. In line with the [Stevenson/Farmer review](#), the University recognises the three phases that people will experience at work and structures the delivery of this policy according to these three phases. “At any one time many employees will be thriving, but with frequent movement between *thriving*, *struggling* and those who are *ill*, and possibly *off work*.”

#### 4.2 Thriving

##### 4.2.1 Programme of Wellbeing Initiatives

The University is committed to the creation of a healthy workplace and works in collaboration with relevant staff networks, recognised trade unions and partners to create and publicise a clear, realistic and achievable range of provision designed to protect the health and wellbeing of employees and to optimise the opportunities for staff to look out for others and look after themselves. These include:

- Development opportunities for staff and managers on understanding and supporting wellbeing and mental health, on the implications of structural inequalities on wellbeing and mental health and on creating an inclusive environment in which wellbeing and mental health conversations happen as part of routine good practice;
- Opportunities for physical activity (e.g. University sports and physical wellbeing activities and facilities, cycle to work scheme);
- Promotion of on campus spaces, both open and building-based to encourage the use of social and quiet spaces and outside space in sustaining wellbeing and mental health;
- Healthy eating campaigns and options offered by outlets on campus;
- A website wellbeing hub where all content relating to University support for wellbeing and mental health is curated and developed;
- Optional use of wellness plans, including support for staff and line managers; and
- A mental health first-aid programme which trains and supports volunteers to be a first point of workplace contact for individuals and raise awareness of the importance of looking out for each other and looking after ourselves

##### 4.2.2 Dignity and Respect

The University recognises that wellbeing and mental health may be adversely affected by the experience of disrespectful behaviours. The Dignity and Respect policy includes procedures for reporting and handling disrespectful behaviour.

Staff can also seek advice on the options available from a [Dignity and Respect Champion](#).

#### 4.3 Struggling and being ill

The University provides an environment in which staff who have wellbeing and/or mental health problems that may affect their work can access suitable support, and in which reasonable steps can be taken to make adjustments to their work circumstances to enable them to return to wellness/thrive at work. This provision include:

##### 4.3.1 Occupational Health Service

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The University's Occupational Health (OH) is contracted out to a third party organisation. OH provides independent, professional advice on fitness to work and return to work including adjustments, together with advice on a range of general and other health issues affecting employees across the University. Managers make referrals to OH, in discussion with staff.

#### 4.3.2 Adjustments

Adjustments for staff may include the following;

- Adjustments to a workplace or provision of specialist equipment
- Workload management
- Agreeing a change in working hours for a period of time
- Arranging learning and development

Staff who experience a need for adjustments should first discuss their needs with their line manager. The line manager will contact the relevant HR Business Partner for advice and may make an occupational health referral, in consultation with the member of staff.

OH advice on workplace-adjustments is implemented by the School or Division in consultation with the employee. HR Business Partners will advise as necessary.

New employees will be asked to contact the HR Division before they start if they feel they need workplace adjustments, noting that the need for adjustments can arise at any time and should be notified as they arise.

#### 4.3.3 Staff Welfare Support

The University provides an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which offers confidential, 24 hour information, advice and guidance on a range of topics covering wellbeing and mental health. The aim of this service is to provide employees with a free, confidential source of advice on issues of concern to them. Callers to the [helpline](#) will be given support, advice and information to deal with any issues they may be facing. The helpline service can be complemented by one to one counselling.

#### 4.3.4 Crisis support and information

In addition to the EAP, the University provides information and guidance on crisis support, both in and out of working hours.

4.4 The University community is diverse and the University recognises that staff who have one or more protected characteristic may experience fluctuating wellbeing and mental health. The University seeks to understand the ways in which structural inequalities can impact wellbeing and mental health and to mitigate those impacts.

4.5 The University will create an environment in which staff feel they can disclose any relevant wellbeing or mental health matters so that appropriate measures can be identified and implemented to actively support them. The University will respect the confidentiality of staff in making such declarations and will ensure that information is managed in line with data protection legislation.

## 5. LEGISLATION AND GOOD PRACTICE

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- 5.1 The University has legal obligations under health and safety legislation to manage risks to the health and safety of employees. This includes mental and physical health.
- 5.2 The University defines itself as a health setting, as defined in the UUK's initiative *Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities*, i.e. as "a place or social context in which people engage in daily activities where environmental, organisational, and personal factors interact to affect health and wellbeing."

<b>Review / Contacts / References</b>	
Policy title:	Staff wellbeing and mental health
Date approved:	
Approving body:	
Last review date:	
Revision history:	
Next review date:	
Related internal policies, procedures, guidance:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 <a href="#">Health and Safety policy</a></li> <li>2 <a href="#">Stress management policy for staff (tba)</a></li> <li>3 <a href="#">Dignity and Respect policy</a></li> <li>4 <a href="#">Sickness absence procedure</a></li> <li>5 <a href="#">Remote working framework</a></li> <li>6 <a href="#">Grievance procedure</a></li> <li>7 <a href="#">Equality and Diversity Policy</a></li> <li>8 <a href="#">Capability procedure</a></li> <li>9 <a href="#">Flexible working procedure</a></li> <li>10 <a href="#">Safeguarding policy</a></li> <li>11 <a href="#">Data protection policy</a></li> <li>12 <a href="#">Staff wellbeing hub</a></li> <li>13 <a href="#">Thriving at Work (Stevenson/Farmer report)</a></li> <li>14 <a href="#">Mentally Healthy Universities</a></li> <li>15 <a href="#">Race Equality Charter Action Plan (tba)</a></li> </ol>
Policy owner:	HR
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