



*This word cloud was
created from the words
used by staff during
Campus Conversations to
define wellbeing.*



Employee Wellbeing Strategy

2019 – 2022



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Introduction

Ulster University's People and Culture Strategy provides clarity and sets direction around the 'conditions which will let people flourish'. It sets out the Vision for creating an environment where we **'achieve excellence by working together'**.

As part of this Vision, the People and Culture strategy recognises the priority to 'promote wellbeing' and includes three aspirations for Employee Wellbeing, namely:

- We will provide a healthy, happy and purposeful environment that promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of all our staff
- We will create a workplace where individuals can be supported to develop their own ideal work/life balance
- We will promote an environment where staff wellbeing is integrated into day-to-day practices – where it is at the heart of what we do, rather than a separate process and approach.

This vision supports the University's commitment within our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy 'framework' to create a culture that "ensures and promotes the health, safety and the physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of all staff, students and partners".

Responsibility for this strategy and its implementation lies with the Senior Leadership Team. The Strategy is approved by the University's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and reviewed and endorsed by the Council of the University on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, we all have a role in supporting ourselves and others to proactively manage our personal, team and organisation wellbeing.

In policy and in practice, the links between our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, the promotion of a sustainable environment and Employee Wellbeing are well established. The University views these areas as being inextricably linked to our Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

We recognise that delivering this strategy will take time and will require staff to work in partnership with stakeholders including our key delivery partners, the Trade Unions and others to contribute to our combined success.

This Strategy provides detail on how we will achieve our aspirations for Employee Wellbeing.

Why does employee wellbeing matter?

Growing evidence shows that the workplace can be an effective place to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Being in work can offer financial reward, social connections, satisfaction and a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose. As we spend a significant proportion of our waking hours at work, it goes without saying that the University plays a significant part in influencing our overall health and wellbeing.

The 2017 Staff Survey, in which 70% of our staff participated, showed that:

- **83%** of staff feel proud to work for the University;
- **91%** of staff generally, enjoy their work; and
- **83%** feel the University is a good place to work

From the survey, however, comments relating to Wellbeing showed that only:

- **43%** of staff feel valued by the University;
- **42%** of staff feel the University provides good support to help them balance work with personal commitments; and
- **40%** of staff feel the University is interested in their wellbeing.

This evidence has highlighted the importance of wellbeing for Ulster University. This in turn has led to the creation of the Wellbeing team within the People and Culture Directorate and to the development of this Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

In addition to improving our individual wellbeing, this strategy will have a positive impact on our teams, our students, the University as a whole and on the wider society in which we live. Delivering this strategy will also act a differentiator allowing us to attract, retain and improve employee engagement.

Finally, and most importantly, it is only right that in wanting to become an employer of choice that we pro-actively support the wellbeing of our staff as our greatest resource.



A state of positive physical, mental, social and emotional health. It includes financial capability and a safe and secure environment that, together, allow individuals to develop and achieve their potential both at work and in the wider community.

Developed from World Health Organisation's definition of Occupational Health

Wellbeing Strategy Pillars

This strategy has six pillars and we have outlined how we will strengthen each of these pillars.



Physical

- Provide the opportunity and support for all employees to increase physical activity
- Raise awareness of healthy lifestyle options and support these in the workplace
- Develop policies, procedures and facilities to support employees who are unwell to remain at work and to return to work after sickness absence, e.g. through access to physiotherapy, rehabilitation, occupational health, phased returns, etc. This includes those with hidden illnesses
- Support the opportunity for healthy affordable food choices via on-campus outlets and facilities



Mental

- Manage stress proactively, including ensuring that stress risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed for all areas of the University
- Develop policies and procedures that represent best practice with regard to mental health including creating an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those experiencing mental ill health and challenges the stigma around this
- Ensure reasonable workloads that allow for sensible work/life balance and downtime and that are also stimulating and engaging
- Offer 24 hour support to all staff and the provision of counselling services on request, free of charge and within three working days
- Enable and equip staff with the skills, knowledge and confidence to support themselves/others, as appropriate, who may be experiencing mental health issues



Social

- Ensure our work/life balance policies, including leave, flexible working, etc., align with best practice
- Promote a culture that recognises the impact of being constantly connected, the value of downtime and the need for healthy sleeping patterns
- Encourage civic and community engagement to improve a sense of belonging and create strong links within the wider environments in which we live and work
- Provide opportunities for staff involvement in activities in and out of work time, including opportunities for volunteering



Emotional

- Encourage and support staff to develop both personally and professionally
- Provide a wide range of opportunities in the workplace for staff to improve professional and personal relationships, to reflect and to manage self-care
- Promote a culture of zero tolerance of bullying and harassment



Financial

- Ensure reward and benefits policies allow opportunities to support employees at all stages of their career
- Promote employment practices that avoid low pay, insecure contracts, pay gaps and ensure job security as far as possible, whilst meeting business requirements
- Communicate on current pay and reward and signpost employees to sources of financial advice
- Ensure equitable application of reward and benefits policies



Environment

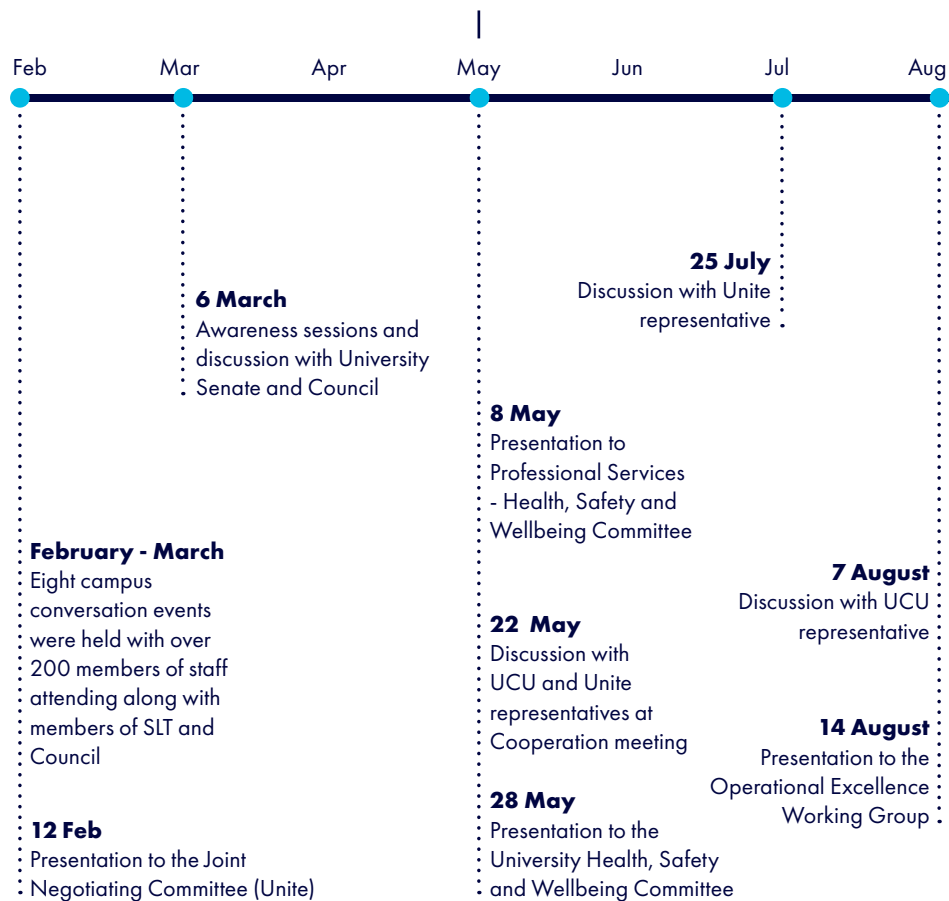
- Ensure that the work environment is safe, with safe working practices and equipment
- Provide work spaces that are designed not only to be comfortable and meet the ergonomic needs for work, but where employees feel valued and inspired
- Provide and support the use of spaces and facilities that encourage employees to rest, socialise and participate in wellbeing activity, away from their immediate work environment
- Create an environment which celebrates equality, diversity and inclusivity

By concentrating on these pillars, Ulster University will be well placed to create and sustain a culture that differentiates us as a place of learning and achievement, where all are proud to work, and focused on both our personal and collective wellbeing.



Timeline

Year 1 (2018/19) Developing the Strategy



Year 2 (2019/20) Introducing Wellbeing

Year 3 (2020/21) Embedding Wellbeing

Year 4 (2021/22) Living Wellbeing

How will we measure our success?

Success is not one dimensional and there are multiple metrics, factors and aspects to consider within both a University and a wellbeing context. Therefore, a robust process is required to continually reflect upon and review the delivery of our Wellbeing Strategy – utilising both qualitative and quantitative data, and through continual dialogue with staff, students and other stakeholders.

As such we will use measures and methods, examples of which are listed, against which we will set tangible targets, to monitor actual progress.

- Increasing participation levels in wellbeing activity both at work and outside the workplace
- Benchmarking 'success' via staff surveys

- Monitoring levels of employee engagement
- Utilising innovative methods of capturing and analysing data in addition to more traditional metrics such as sickness absence, Occupational Health appointments, use of Counselling services, etc.
- Evaluating all training, activity and opportunity for continual improvement in a dynamic and timely manner
- Creating a comprehensive annual report
- Providing regular communication to employees
- Seeking feedback from stakeholders on a regular basis

Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Delivery

In each of the three years of the strategy, plans of work will be developed, communicated and delivered based on the priorities agreed by SLT for that year and linked to the phase as outlined in the timeline. The priorities and plan of work for Year One, Introducing Wellbeing, are included in appendix 1. Subsequent priorities and plans will be issued in due course. An annual report will be presented to the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee that will set out the progress made in the delivery of these plans of work, and the wider progress made towards achieving the strategy overall.

Appendix 1

Wellbeing Strategy Priorities for 2019/20

Introducing Wellbeing

1. Engaging Staff

- Recognise employee contribution appropriately
- Create a wellbeing resource of Wellbeing Champions in each Faculty and Directorate to be advocates for Wellbeing across the University
- Develop a calendar of wellbeing activities for each campus, coordinated in conjunction with recognised Wellbeing Champions

2. Promote good Work/Life Balance

- Review Work/Life Balance policy in line with modern workplace practices and ensuring transparency and fairness
- Review Leave policy
- Encourage Civic/Community engagement
- Review models for workload assessment

3. Develop good Wellbeing communication channels

- Employee Wellbeing Week
- Campus workshops/discussion opportunities
- Making use of
 - Insight
 - Portal
 - Wellbeing webpage
- Look at the feasibility of apps, blogs, emails, social media and existing networks, such as the Disability Network and Women's Network

4. Create mechanisms to assess staff wellbeing

- Create and trial pulse surveys
- Wellbeing Champion forum meetings
- Focus groups
- Inputs at team meetings
- Feedback to staff

5. Provide assistance for managers in supporting their teams

- Identify and design courses to support management
- Organise initial courses to run during 2019/20
- Introduce a revised Sickness Absence Policy at earliest opportunity
- Integrate with leadership development programmes to ensure the strategic necessities of wellbeing are addressed, e.g. vision, values, behaviours, workloads, change management, performance and development, etc

6. Enhance Mental Health Awareness

- Enhance mental ill health awareness, knowledge and skills in collaboration with Student Support colleagues
- Sign up to the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter
- Relaunch the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- Train a network of mental health first aiders

2019/20 Wellbeing Activity Plan

Action	Date	Engaging staff
Organise and deliver Employee Wellbeing Week	Sept 19	✓
Recruit Wellbeing Champions	Sept 19 – Dec 19	✓
Develop Wellbeing Champions via training and informal Forum meetings	Nov 19 – May 20	✓
Deliver 'Introduction to Wellbeing' for Managers workshops	Oct 19 – Apr 20	
Deliver Stress Management training	Nov 19 – Mar 20	
Organise stress awareness sessions for staff	Oct 19 to May 20	
Organise 'mindful managers' courses	Oct 19 – May 20	
Review Work/Life Balance Policy in line with modern workplace practices	Dec 19	✓
Encourage Civic/Community engagement	Sept 19 – July 20	✓
Develop Campus Wellbeing action plans	Oct 19 – July 20	✓
Develop Wellbeing page on internet accessible via the portal	Dec 19	✓
Create library of wellbeing material	Oct 19 – June 20	✓

Promote good Work/Life Balance	Develop Wellbeing communication channels	Create mechanisms to assess staff wellbeing	Providing assistance for managers in supporting their teams	Enhance Mental Health Awareness
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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