

# UCD Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for Employees



**Policy owner:** Equality, Diversity & Inclusion / Culture & Engagement

**Approval date and body:**

UMT, 15 March 2022

## 1. Purpose

This policy sets out the University's commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of employees in UCD as part of an overall responsibility to promote a healthy work environment where all aspects of health are championed. It is recognised that many of us will experience challenges to our mental health and wellbeing in our personal and work lives. It is the aim of the University to create a supportive, empathetic and positive environment which contributes to and fosters good mental health and wellbeing for all our colleagues.

We understand that mental health and wellbeing are impacted by a range of factors in our personal lives and at work and the University wants to create an environment where people feel safe to bring their whole selves to work. This policy seeks to promote a positive working environment that actively supports the mental health and wellbeing of employees, that helps to build resilience and provides support to those experiencing mental ill health and enables employees to reach their full potential. The University aims to create a culture of openness and honesty around mental health issues in the workplace, where everyone has a role to play in achieving this and to safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of all. The University recognises the importance of ensuring that all employees are able to work in a supportive, professional and caring environment, where they are valued and respected and treated equally in line with the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all UCD employees.

## 3. Definitions

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

*"A state of wellbeing is one in which the individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community. It is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote,*

*interact, earn a living, and enjoy life*<sup>1</sup>. People move on a continuum ranging from good mental health to mental ill health or disability and the support or interventions required will vary depending on where a person is on that continuum.

### **Mental Ill Health**

Mental ill health or mental health conditions are those that are clinically diagnosable and affects the way people think, feel, behave, or interact with others<sup>2</sup>. There are many different mental illnesses or mental health conditions, and they have different symptoms that impact people's lives in different ways. They may be more or less severe, and their treatment pathways may vary. As mental health is on a continuum, some may be experiencing the more severe illness end of the spectrum at times. Mental illnesses or mental health conditions (like all other health problems) are often episodic, meaning there are times ('episodes') of ill health and times of better or good mental health.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness**

It is important that employees feel safe to make their manager aware of issues of a mental health nature if they wish to seek support. UCD recognises that having this conversation can be difficult, therefore it is extremely important that we seek to create a supportive environment which encourages employees experiencing mental health difficulties to discuss the supports that they would find helpful without the fear of stigma.

In addition to one's manager, there are a range of internal and external supports that individuals can speak to confidentially such as the Employee Assistance Service, Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Colleagues and Employee Networks. Further information is available in the [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion website section on mental health and wellbeing](#).

These discussions are welcomed by UCD as this ensures that the appropriate supports and accommodations, if necessary, can be put in place to allow individuals to participate fully and equally in all aspects of the University and to support them in their lives more broadly.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

UCD is committed to working positively with anyone raising awareness about their mental health difficulties, so that we can identify what may help them to carry out their role as well as supporting their wellbeing more broadly. A clear process is in place for anyone who raises awareness about a mental health issue or any type of disability and wishes to seek support or a reasonable accommodation. Guidance for employees and managers on the request and provision of reasonable accommodations is available on the [Equality Diversity & Inclusion website](#). Reasonable Accommodations can be defined as some modification to tasks or the structure of a job or the workplace which allows an employee with a disability (mental health issue in this instance) to carry out their roles to as full capacity as possible and enjoy equal employment opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. *Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report)* Geneva: World Health Organization; 2004

<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.positiveperceptionspsychology.com/what-is-mental-health-why-it-is-must-to-talk-about-it-in-todays-scenario/>

## 4. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- The University will promote and support the overall health and wellbeing of individuals which includes mental health.
- The University commits to promoting a positive and respectful working environment that supports the mental health and wellbeing of employees and provides support to enable employees to reach their full potential.
- The University will raise awareness at all levels of the organisation about the importance of promoting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and to help eliminate any stigma or concerns around raising awareness through a range of activities including training and engagement with the community on this topic.
- Help will be available to each individual to learn how to manage their mental health and wellbeing, how to build resilience, and how they can enable/support the mental health of others. However, it is important that the University provides that supportive environment in instances where people may not be in a position to manage their own mental health at a particular point in time.
- The University is committed to the removal of organisational risk factors in relation to mental ill health such as stress and will not tolerate bullying, discrimination or harassment.
- The University will enable an employee with a mental health difficulty or another disability to participate or advance in employment and undertake training and other opportunities.
- The University will ensure that those who have responsibilities to support employees experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues are equipped to do so.
- The University will provide a supportive environment and raise awareness around supports and resources acknowledging that the supports provided by UCD are not intended to replace services that already exist in the community or through the HSE.
- The University will comply with legal obligations contained in the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2011 and the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

These principles have been developed in the spirit of the [U21 University Mental Health Declaration](#) of which UCD is a signatory of.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

The following are the roles and responsibilities of key groups in UCD.

### **University Management Team**

- Takes an active role in promoting a positive culture and attitude to mental health and wellbeing and act as role models to start the conversation.
- Ensure a framework is in place to promote mental health and wellbeing.
- Support the implementation of this policy which will be guided by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group.
- Ensure confidential supports are in place internally and externally to support those experiencing mental ill health.
- Support the provision of suitable training and supports to managers to equip them to be in a position to support employees who may be experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues and to employees so that they can manage their mental health and wellbeing and support others.
- Support activities to implement the principles of the [U21 University Mental Health Declaration](#)

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group**

- Act as a consultative group in terms of best practice, shared learning and experiences
- Ongoing engagement with the University community on progress of the implementation of actions and impact in this area.
- Support the development of an action plan for mental health stigma reduction and a framework to support good mental health and wellbeing for employees and oversee their implementation.
- Support the development and implementation of a Mental Health and Wellbeing policy for employees.
- Raise awareness around mental health and wellbeing supports, to act as champions in this area and to work towards the elimination of discrimination and stigma often associated with mental health.
- Measure and report on the effectiveness of this policy, supporting documentation, training and other activities.

### **People Managers**

- Ensure they are familiar with and understand their duty of care for employees in relation to mental health and wellbeing and to proactively engage with individuals around this.
- Actively promote positive mental health and wellbeing and an environment where people are encouraged, and feel safe, to disclose any issues of mental ill health.
- Promote with employees the principles and importance of work life balance, the right to switch off and other wellbeing measures to make their lives less stressful.
- Participate in any mental health and wellbeing initiatives and training that are provided and create a more supportive and inclusive work environment for their employees.
- Organise awareness raising initiatives locally to promote mental health and wellbeing in their area and encourage all employees to participate.
- Enable positive mental health and wellbeing and equality in practice through the provision of timely and appropriate reasonable accommodation and supports for individuals who are experiencing mental health difficulties or mental ill health.
- Provide employee support during periods of sickness absence and undertake return to work conversations to support individuals on their return in work in accordance with the University's Sick Leave policy including the provision of any reasonable accommodation required.
- Ensure that employees experiencing mental ill health or returning to work after a period of absence due to mental ill health are treated in a sensitive and sympathetic manner.
- Respect the confidentiality of employees who disclose issues of a mental health nature.

### **Employees**

Employees have a duty to themselves and others to maximise mental wellbeing in the workplace as follows:

- Take an active part in mental health and wellbeing initiatives and undertake training provided in this area.
- In line with UCD values, promote inclusivity in relation to mental health and wellbeing.
- Seek support to learn how to manage their own mental health and wellbeing effectively recognising there may be instances where people may not be in a position to manage their own mental health at a particular point in time.
- Enable and support the mental health and wellbeing of others.

- Be familiar with this policy and associated materials. Employees with a student facing role should also be familiar with the UCD Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy and associated Procedures.
- Seek support from a medical practitioner and/or use the University's supports or other appropriate professional services if they have mental health issues that are available such as the Employee Assistance Service if required.
- Reporting to their line manager, HR, SIRC or EDI any risk to mental health within the workplace that may pose a risk to themselves or others.
- Supporting colleagues if they are experiencing mental ill health and encourage them to talk to their manager or advise them of supports available.
- Taking positive steps to safeguard their own mental health, in particular by taking regular allocated breaks, by working reasonable hours and recognising the principles and importance of work life balance and the right to switch off.

### **Human Resources**

- Ensure that Occupational Health and Employee Counselling services are accessible for all employees.
- Support employees and provide information and advice if an individual discloses a mental health issue.
- Offer advice and support for managers in dealing with instances of mental ill health amongst their employees and how to promote a culture of mental wellbeing within their area of responsibility.
- Liaise with managers over return-to-work arrangements following a period of absence.
- Provide training for managers to ensure they have a level of awareness of how to support employees with mental health issues.
- Advising on changes in legislation and current best practice guidance in respect to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- Developing working relationships with local Mental Health Champions and specialist services as appropriate.

## **6. Related documents & Supports**

- [UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#)
- [UCD Health Promotions Strategy](#)
- [UCD Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#)
- [UCD Bullying and Harassment policy](#)
- [UCD Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Employee Assistance Service](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Colleagues](#)
- [Supports in relation to provision of Reasonable Accommodation\(s\)](#)
- [UCD Managing Attendance and Sick Leave Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Employment Equality Act 1998 – 2015](#)
- [Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005](#)
- [UCD Mental Health & Wellbeing Supports](#)

## 7. Version History

| Version | Date     | Description   | Author                   |
|---------|----------|---|--------------------------|
| 1.01    | 12.05.21 | Development of new Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy | EDI/Culture & Engagement |
| 1.02    | 21.10.21 | Revision of draft following consultation              | EDI/Culture & Engagement |