Supporting Employees and Students affected by Domestic Violence/Abuse

Policy owner	EDI	**Approval date and body**	UMT, 10 June 2025

Purpose

The University recognises that members of its employee and student community can be affected by domestic violence/abuse, and this will have an impact on their safety, wellbeing, and ability to work or study. This may be someone who has experienced domestic violence/abuse in the past, is currently living with domestic violence/abuse or as someone who has been impacted upon in another way. Many of those impacted are prevented from working, forced to work part-time or take sick leave, or become ill, stressed, or lose confidence as a result of the abuse they are subjected to. Some will ultimately cease working.

The aim of this policy is to raise awareness regarding domestic violence/abuse and healthy relationships and ensure that any employee or student who may be impacted by domestic violence/abuse knows that it is a safe place in which they can disclose so that they can be supported in their work or studies. Additionally, this policy is intended to provide line managers and student support roles with a greater understanding of the impact of domestic abuse/or violence and practical supports they can offer.

The policy has been drafted in line with the relevant provisions of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 and guidance developed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Women's Aid.

This policy will also adhere to the requirements of the UCD Child Safeguarding Statement.

Scope

This policy applies to all permanent and temporary employees and all students of UCD. The policy is applicable in all cases regardless of gender although statistics would indicate that women are affected disproportionately. Domestic violence/abuse may occur between individuals who are or have been intimate partners (whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim), or between people who are family members or household members. It includes those employees/students directly impacted by domestic violence/abuse or where they are supporting a relevant person (see definitions section). Domestic violence/abuse can affect anyone irrespective of gender, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, family or civil status or any other background. It includes experiences that are ongoing, as well as past experiences.

Definitions

Domestic Violence/Abuse: For this policy and in line with the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, domestic violence and abuse is defined as: violence, or threat of violence, including sexual violence and acts of coercive control committed against an employee, student or a relevant person (defined below) by another person. The domestic violence may have been committed by:

- a spouse or civil partner of the employee, student or relevant person;
- a cohabitant of the employee, student or relevant person;
- a person who is or was in an intimate relationship with the employee, student or relevant person;
- an adult child of the employee, student or relevant person.

The most common types of domestic abuse are physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse (see guidance materials for further information). Abuse is seldom overt, and violence and abuse often increases in frequency and severity over time.

Relevant Person: Under the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, the **relevant person** is defined as:

- An employee's child (including an adopted child) or dependent;
- An employee's spouse or civil partner;
- A cohabitant of the employee; or
- A person with whom the employee is in an intimate relationship.

Victim-Survivor: The term 'victim-survivor' is commonly used language that refers to anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse. This term is sometimes used to reflect that some people prefer the term 'victim', while others prefer 'survivor'. Some prefer neither term and individuals' preferences should always be respected in direct conversation.

Domestic Violence Leave (for employees only):

Under the Worklife Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023, employees who have experienced domestic violence/abuse are entitled to up to five days paid leave in any 12 consecutive months. The leave may also be availed of by an employee that is supporting a 'relevant person' (defined above). The domestic violence to which the supports relate includes experiences that are ongoing, as well as past experiences.

There is no minimum service requirement, and no notice period is required as the need may not be foreseeable. Whilst there should be confirmation of the leave being taken, further information regarding the facts surrounding the taking of the leave or documentary evidence/proof should not be requested. The leave can be used to support the employee in a variety of ways see *UCD Domestic Violence Leave Guidance Document* for more information on taking domestic violence leave.

Support for Employees and Students impacted by domestic violence/abuse: There is no single approach to supporting individuals as experiences and needs will differ.

Examples of supports/options that employees may find useful are listed below. Employees seeking supports should discuss these options with their line manager in the first instance and support will be provided by the relevant areas to put these in place (confidentially and with consent from the employee).

- Offering temporary/permanent changes in the workplace, work times or patterns
- Raise awareness of the range of flexible work options that might be of assistance
- Signposting to the Employee Assistance Service and external specialist support services.
- An appointment can be arranged with the University's Occupational Health Provider to provide support and accommodations and/or necessary medical advice to the employee.

- Ensuring the effects of abuse are taken into consideration when reviewing an employee's performance goals and/or workload.
- Providing paid domestic violence leave
- Consideration of relevant supports regarding salary (e.g. changing bank account details)

Examples of supports for students are listed below. Students seeking supports should discuss these options with their student adviser in the first instance and support will be provided by the relevant areas required to put these in place (confidentially and with consent from the student).

- Signposting to counselling and external specialist support services.
- Assisting with contacting the Gardaí
- Offering various options available to students such as:
    - taking a leave of absence,
    - adjusting their course load,
    - exploring flexible study arrangements,
    - extenuating circumstances
    - Other support that the student may find useful can be discussed

Principles

- Create a safe and respectful environment where people feel safe/enabled to disclose if affected by domestic violence/abuse so that they can receive appropriate support.
- Respects the right to privacy for all employees and students and the need for confidentiality unless there is an immediate risk to the safety of the individual affected, their colleagues/peers or others or where there is a requirement under the law, when ordered by a court. (Advice should be sought in any of these instances from the HR Partner in the first instance).
- Promote enhanced understanding and awareness amongst the University community around domestic violence/abuse, the ongoing impact on those affected and the types of internal and external supports available.
- Acknowledgement that recovering from the trauma of domestic violence/abuse is a long process and can take a significant period of time to heal.
- To support the affected employee to remain at work and the affected student in continuing with their education during a difficult period in their domestic life.

Roles and Responsibilities

UMT Responsibilities

- To lead on the creation of a culture where people feel safe to disclose if they are experiencing domestic abuse/violence so that they can avail of relevant supports.
- To provide for the health, safety and welfare of our employees and students in their work and study and aim to provide a safe, healthy environment from which all may benefit.
- To support awareness raising initiatives such as training and communications to increase understanding of the implications of domestic violence/abuse for employees and students.

People Managers/Student Support and other Trusted Roles Responsibilities

- To have a level of awareness of this policy and supporting guidance documentation and seek advice from the HR Partner or Student Adviser team (as relevant) without breaking confidentiality.
- To attend any relevant information/awareness raising session on domestic violence/abuse available as a support for these roles.
- To listen and offer support in a sensitive and non-judgmental fashion including signposting to specialist external sources of help and support.
- To protect confidentiality in all instances (subject to legal requirements to disclose)
- To handle the situation with care and sensitivity – individuals should never feel pressured into disclosing personal information that they do not feel comfortable sharing and they may need some time to decide what to do.
- To support employees and students to access supports that may be of assistance to them such as those defined above.
- To be clear as to one's boundaries in relation to the level of support that can be provided – employees and students should be signposted to counselling services and other expert support and guidance services.
- To undergo any training/awareness raising sessions made available to them.

Employee/Student Responsibilities

- To be aware of this policy and attend any relevant training or awareness raising events on domestic violence/abuse.
- To be supportive of colleagues/peers who may be affected by domestic violence/ abuse.

- To respect confidentiality if disclosed to but can anonymously seek advice from the HR Partner (employees) or Student Adviser (students) if needs be.
- To be aware that if affected by domestic violence/abuse, individuals can speak to a line manager or HR Partner (employees) or a Student Adviser or other trusted roles (students) if support is required. If the affected individual and the person carrying out the behaviour are both employees or students of UCD, the Dignity and Respect Support Service can also provide support.
- To understand that there is never any obligation on an employee or student to disclose that they are currently or have in the past been subjected to domestic violence/abuse.

HR Partners/Student Adviser Responsibilities

- To support awareness raising in relation to the policy and guidance documentation.
- To provide advice in relation to the provisions of the policy.
- To provide guidance to employees and students so that they can access supports.
- To provide guidance to managers or student support/trusted roles who are supporting individuals impacted by domestic violence/abuse.
- To signpost to other internal and external support available.
- Human Resources/Student Advisers are not positioned as experts on domestic violence but will provide the information to support line managers, employees, student support and other trusted roles and students line with UCD policy.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- To support the creation of a culture where people feel safe to disclose if they have or are experiencing domestic violence/abuse.
- To raise awareness in relation to the policy, guidance and supports available to those who are impacted domestic violence/abuse through awareness raising events.
- To support those involved in the implementation of the policy through the provision of advice, training/information sessions and other supports.
- To review this policy and guidance and ensure that UCD continues to be committed to supporting employees and students in line with best practice.

Related Documents/Resources

Domestic Violence/Abuse Guidance Document for Managers (and Colleagues) supporting Employees

Version History

Version	Date	Description	Author
1.0	June 2025	Development of Supporting Employees and Students affected by Domestic Violence/Abuse Policy	EDI