Health & Wellbeing Policy

1.   Statement of Principles

1.1   This policy forms part of the University's general Health & Safety policy arrangements as well as contributing to the promotion of good health. It encompasses such matters as smoking, alcohol and drugs, nutrition, physical activity & stress.

1.2   The University is committed to providing a working environment and management practices which promote employee wellbeing and good health.

1.3   The University recognises the important and constructive role which the recognised trade Unions play to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of staff as indicated by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). The University will fulfil its commitment by:

- Identifying potential hazards or circumstances which might contribute to inappropriate levels of work-related stress and conduct risk assessments to eliminate or control the risks from such stress. These circumstances and risk assessments will then be kept under review;
- Consulting with relevant trade union safety representatives and other stakeholders (e.g. Heads of Department), on issues relating to staff wellbeing;
- Increasing awareness and understanding of stress related issues and the importance of general good health and wellbeing through identification, prevention, control and subsequent monitoring of causes of stress at work including where appropriate training and health promotion
- Providing enhanced training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices appropriate to this policy;
- Providing a confidential counselling service for staff whose wellbeing is adversely affected by stress.
- Ensuring that appropriate resources are provided to enable managers to implement the University's agreed staff wellbeing strategy

1.4   In turn, staff will be encouraged to take a responsible approach to health and wellbeing issues, including assisting those conducting risk assessments of stress in the workplace.

2.   Definitions

2.1   The Health & Safety Executive define stress as being "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them". However it is important that the difference between "pressure" and "stress" be acknowledged: pressure does not necessarily give rise to stress and pressure can sometimes motivate. Whilst acknowledging that pressure and stress may also be caused by a range of issues external to the workplace, the University's prime responsibility is to address work related stress.

3.   Policy Objectives

3.1   The aims of the policy are to:

- Provide advice and information about minimising risks to health
- Outline specific responsibilities
- Educate staff about the causes, effects and management of stress
- Develop in partnership with the trade unions strategies intended to improve health at work.
- Provide relevant support to staff, in particular ensuring managers are both proactive and respond in a timely manner to concerns raised by staff and unions.

3.2   To achieve these objectives the University will:

- Carry out risk assessments to identify health and wellbeing issues related to work
- Implement appropriate control measures to minimise risks to health and wellbeing
- Monitor and audit arrangements in an effort to improve the quality of the working environment
- Raise awareness of the causes, signs and symptoms of stress and stress-related illness, and of the ways in which the University supports individuals
- Provide training to all managers on the Health & Wellbeing Policy and how to use it effectively
- Educate employees in techniques for recognising and coping with potentially stressful situations
- Provide information about appropriate welfare services to all employees

3.3   The following have been identified as appropriate measures of employee performance and wellbeing for the purposes of managing health & wellbeing:

- Absences will be recorded and monitored for developing patterns
- Exit questionnaires will be used and followed up with exit interviews where appropriate
- Use of the University's Occupational Health and Counselling service will be monitored without breaching confidentiality
- HR will conduct a biennial review, agreed jointly with the trade unions, of staff wellbeing indicators to identify trends or hot spots.
- Other forms of data gathering will also be used to include self-referral and Trade Union referral.

4.   Causes of stress

4.1   The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has identified six primary areas of risk in the causes of stress. The following HSE chart identifies the main causes of stress and provides a brief indicator of what can be done to manage these risks:

Cause of Stress	What can be done
Demands. *Employees often become overloaded if they cannot cope with the amount of work or type of work they are asked to do*	The job design and the provision should be considered to identify ways to manage the overload. Consideration should also be given to alternative work patterns and environment.
Control. *Employees can feel disaffected and perform*	Consideration should be given to how

poorly if they have no say over how and when they do their work.	employees are involved in decision making and their contribution as individuals and as part of teams.
Support. *Employees can feel isolated and stressed if they feel they cannot speak with their line managers or if they do not feel they have adequate support or provided with constructive feedback and advice*	Employees should be given the opportunity to discuss the issues causing stress with their line manger sympathetically and should be kept informed of any developments or changes.
Relationships. *Employees can often experience problems relating to bullying, harassment or discipline as a result of poor working relationships or lack of recognition or reward.*	The policies and procedures relating to handling grievances, absence, misconduct and bullying and harassment should be reviewed on a regular basis.
Role *Employees can feel anxious if there is ambiguity regarding their role or where there is a lack of clarity in terms of what is expected of them.*	Particular attention should be paid to the induction of new staff and the creation of meaningful and well structured job descriptions. Every effort should be made to maintain a close link between individual targets and organisational goals.
Change *Changes in market demands, technology and organisational structure can lead to insecurity and uncertainty.*	Where changes are anticipated every effort must be made to communicate / consult with all those affected and to discuss and resolve issues together.

5. Responsibilities

5.1   All staff have a responsibility to comply with Health & Safety measures instituted by the University. The following people will have an involvement as follows:

5.2   **Senior Management** are responsible for ensuring:

  i. The engagement of management at all levels in the importance of managing staff wellbeing.
  ii. Allocation of appropriate resources to enable managers to deliver the agreed strategy proactively, use of the counselling service and health referrals for expert opinion.
  iii. That the identified proactive initiatives, behaviours, systems and policies are embedded in the culture of the organisation.

iv. That the strategy is driven via collective responsibility at Senior Management level.
v. That the HR Director has an overriding responsibility to monitor delivery and alert the Senior Management Team to any concerns.

5.3 Heads of Departments

In addition to the general duties of all managers detailed below, Heads of Departments and Sections influence the culture in their part of the organisation. Their specific responsibilities include:

i. Active implementation and promotion of the principles and behaviours contributing to positive staff wellbeing.
ii. Alertness to employees' personal circumstances and offering additional support where appropriate to members of staff experiencing risks to their wellbeing derived from outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
iii. Ensuring effective communication between management and staff
iv. In particular, ensuring effective communicating where there are organisational and /or procedural changes which can give rise to increased levels of stress in the workplace.
v. Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated in the Department. (see www. Link to Dignity & Respect at Work Policy).

5.4 Line-Managers will:

i. Request HR to carry out stress risk assessments when it is identified that an employee is suffering from stress or where there is a perceived risk of stress and ensure that any reasonable measures identified are implemented.
ii. Ensure that employees are consulted at all times over all aspects of their employment that may cause stress or impact on their health and well-being when changes affecting them are planned.
iii. Ensure that employees receive appropriate training and resources to carry out their duties.
iv. Ensure that staff are provided with appropriate developmental opportunities.
v. Manage absence in accordance with the Absence Management Policy
vi. Consider workloads to ensure jobs are realistic and manageable.
vii. Monitor working hours, overtime and holidays to encourage individuals to take breaks as required by legislation.
viii. Familiarise themselves with the Dignity & Respect at Work Policy concerning bullying and harassment and ensure that employees are aware that this is not tolerated by the University.
ix. Recognise that employees may have experiences in their personal lives that may make them vulnerable to pressures at work and which may have a temporary influence on their work performance e.g. health issues or personal circumstances
x. Treat all discussions with employees around personal stress as confidential unless it is necessary to involve others to deal with the issue and the employee gives written agreement for disclosure.
xi. Where appropriate discuss issues around stress with their Health and Safety Officer, HR Representative, or Trade Union rep.

5.5 Human Resources will:

i. Provide support and guidance to staff on the Health & Wellbeing Policy
ii. Monitor the implementation of the policy within the University with all relevant stakeholders
iii. Provide line-managers with training in all matters relating to this policy
iv. Provide guidance to line-managers on the implementation of the policy to include the appropriate management of individual workloads
v. Will advise, guide and support departments in carrying out stress risk assessments by trained individuals as requested by line-managers.
vi. Provide support to employees experiencing stress and advise them and their line-managers of the support available.
vii. Make referrals to the Occupational Health Service or Counsellor in accordance with the Absence Management Policy
viii. Raise awareness amongst all staff of the importance of work/life balance and the opportunities to achieve this with the University.

5.6   **Employees** will

i. Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and co-operate with Management in any measures taken to reduce stress
ii. Be committed to avoiding causing health and wellbeing problems for other employees, including acting in accordance with the principals of the Dignity & Respect at Work Policy
iii. Be proactive in identifying occasions when they may be suffering from health and wellbeing problems, either work-related, or due to external factors, and alert their line-manager to these where appropriate.
iv. Where employees feel unable to discuss the issues with their managers, they are encouraged to discuss it with their Health & Safety Officer, HR representative, or their Trade Union Representative. The University recognises that, as with Dignity and Respect at Work, where the manager may be seen as a cause of stress, in part or in full, concerns over stress can be immediately taken to a more senior manager.
v. Take advantage of opportunities for counselling and training when recommended, to include making use of the Employee Assistance programme.

5.7   **Trade Unions** will

i. Work with the University to raise awareness and promote the importance of health and well-being in the workplace.
ii. Where aware of concerns, identify these to the Human Resources Department and work with the University in resolving the issues.
iii. Information gathered by the University will be used to identify trends, patterns and will enable the University to identify the areas in which resource should be allocated. All reports will be shared with the recognised campus trade unions.
iv. Share the development of policy via appropriate joint consultation, negotiation and agreement.
v. In matters relating to stress, the University recognises that the Trade Unions hold specific responsibilities as set out by the HSE and indicated in Appendix A of this policy.

6.   Actively managing employee wellbeing

The University's efforts will be concentrated on the promotion of health and wellbeing in the workplace. This will include deploying other University policies and procedures as appropriate (for example, the policies on Absence Management, Dignity & Respect at Work, Flexible Working Policy, etc. In addition, recognising and managing health and wellbeing issues will be incorporated into training for managers.

6.1   Stress Risk Assessments

6.1.1   The University is obliged to assess the nature and scale of risk to the health of its staff in order to implement appropriate preventative and protective steps.

6.1.2   The policy recognises that employees' tolerance thresholds differ and that non-work factors may play a part in determining an individual employee's response.

6.1.3   In accordance with point 5.6, it is of paramount importance that employees share with the University any relevant information which might impact upon their ability to cope with reasonable pressures at work, to include issues such as Disability etc.

6.1.4   Details of the factors likely to lead to work-related stress, methods of assessment and guidance on the completion of a risk assessment is available for all line-managers from the Human Resources Department.

6.2   Training courses – Staff Development Office

6.2.1   A variety of courses may be accessed through the University's [Centre for the Development of Staff & Academic Practice](#) which can contribute to individual's ability to be proactive in managing factors which could lead to health and wellbeing problems.

6.2.2   For a full listing of courses offered please visit the Centre for the Development of Staff & Academic Practice at https://secure.mis.aber.ac.uk/staffdev/sd/list_courses.php

6.3   Counselling Service

6.3.1   Counselling offers an employee an opportunity to work with an experienced and impartial mental health professional to clarify and understand their difficulties and to find more helpful ways of coping and dealing with them.

6.3.2   The University retains the services of an independent counsellor. This service is a confidential one and no details are shared with the University without the explicit consent of the individual involved.

6.3.3   Counselling should be made available to employees who are suffering from issues impacting upon their work performance and that are exceeding their ability to cope. All referrals are made through the Human Resources Department.

6.4   Sports Centre

6.4.1   Aberystwyth University's Sports centre offers an excellent range of activities and facilities to promote heath and wellbeing exercise through exercise and team activities. A range of lunchtime and after-work classes and activities are offered for staff and students of Aberystwyth University.

6.4.2   For those who want a more personalised approach to taking healthy exercise, the Sports Centre has several qualified personal trainers who can provide a tailored exercise programme to meet individual's specific needs.

6.4.3   For further information relating to the courses and services available please contact the Sport Centre at http://www.aber.ac.uk/~pedwww . For details of staff membership please visit http://www.aber.ac.uk/sportscentre/membership_staff.shtml

6.5   Nutrition

The University offers a range of venues in which staff can enjoy a healthy and nutritionally balanced meal or snack. Many of the foods are locally sourced and the University is committed to offering a varied and balanced selection to enable staff to enjoy a healthy and balanced diet. Further information can be obtained from http://www.aber.ac.uk/residential/en/hospitality/places/index.shtml

6.6   Work Life Balance

The University offers a range of family friendly policies which can provide opportunities for staff to develop a good work/Life balance listed below.

- Flexible Working Policy
- Maternity Policy
- Paternity Policy
- Adoption Leave Policy
- Parental Leave

6.7   Useful Contacts

There are also a number of specialist organisations which can offer help and advice in dealing with specific problems such as bereavement, debt, addiction and mental wellbeing. Some of these are listed on the website below.

- Specific Problems - Useful Contacts

Please note that the majority of these sites are created and maintained by parties external to AU. The University cannot and does not endorse or promote any advice, products or external organisations featured on these external sites.

7.   Policy Review

7.1   The Director of Human Resources will co-ordinate a review of the University's Health & Wellbeing Policy on a biennial basis (or more frequently as necessary) to maintain compliance with legislation and good practice.

7.2   The review will be undertaken in liaison with the Health & Safety Committee and the recognised campus trade unions and any proposed amendments will be submitted to Staffing Committee for approval.

7.3   The policy will be Equality Impact Assessed by the Equal Opportunities Advisor particularly in respect of the DDA 1995. All EIAs will include trade union participation.