

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 1.1 The [University Strategic Plan 2015-2020](#) focuses on our people (alumni, students and staff) being at the heart of our vision and critical to our long term success. This strategy seeks to provide a framework, guidance and activities which will promote engagement with our staff to help achieve our strategic objectives.
- 1.2 While improvement to response rates to the Staff Satisfaction Survey in 2014 was a positive development, certain areas were highlighted for improvement, and these identified areas have been further reinforced by feedback from other forms of staff engagement and a recent survey on internal communications. The areas included communication, strategic leadership, improving staff recognition, staff motivation and a sense of purpose linked to structured change management processes.
- 1.3 To address these concerns, a paper was presented to the University Management Group (UMG) in November, 2015 suggesting the formation of an Employee Engagement Working Group. The proposal was approved at University Court in March, 2016 and the Employee Engagement Working Group convened in May 2016 under the leadership of Professor. Margaret Ross (VP for People Strategy).
- 1.4 This strategy and accompanying action plan have been developed after detailed consultations by the Employee Engagement Working group and its constituent sub-groups.
- 1.5 The working group also agreed four key people values to support the institutional values. These are captured in the Employee Value Statement: *A respectful and inclusive community, built on trust and integrity.* This was agreed by court in June 2017.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 This strategy is primarily focused on our staff but will in turn have a positive impact on the student experience, our interactions with Alumni and external stakeholders
- 2.2 The aim of this strategy is to promote the University's intention to actively support and improve employee engagement and, ultimately, the well-being of its community.
- 2.3 The University has formal working relationships with the officially recognised Trade Unions: UCU, Unison, and Unite through which policies are formally negotiated. The university also recognises that effective partnership working with informal staff representative bodies, staff network groups, schools, sections and other staff bodies is crucial to the delivery of its strategy and to informing those formal consultative and negotiating processes.
- 2.4 The University also recognises that many factors, both internal to the University and external to it, influence the health and wellbeing of staff.
- 2.5 This strategy underpins a culture that aims to ensure that all staff can continue to achieve their goals and reach their full potential and that fundamental values including academic freedom are at the forefront.

3 STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- 1 Embed a culture of openness, respect, honesty and dignity at work for all members of the University community

- 2 Promote opportunities for members of the University community to work in partnership and improve staff and student wellbeing;
- 3 Increase communication across layers of management and promote two-way communication ensuring feedback is effectively monitored and acted upon;
- 4 Develop and promote transparent change management practices which enable and empower staff;
- 5 Improve staff morale, organisational citizenship behaviour and identification with the organisation.
- 6 Identify and support opportunities for staff development and career progression through effective management practices and training.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The strategy will be delivered through:

- Awareness-raising campaigns and events for staff;
- Partnership-working across the University, including trade unions;
- Embedding the ethos of the strategy through integrating the values and behaviour statement throughout our practices, policies and procedure; and
- Communicating this strategy to the University community and seeking active participation in implementing it through communication and engagement champions in each area.

5 UNDERPINNING STRUCTURES

5.1 The strategy will be supported by:

- Effective leadership – senior managers leading by example and encouraging a sense of community among all stakeholders;
- Regular implementation reviews of the Employee Engagement action plan and effective progress monitoring by the University's Employee Engagement Working Group and the University Management Group;
- Frequent Engagement activities within the University community;
- Partnering with external stakeholders to adopt and develop sector and University tailored employee engagement practices which are of a high standard and meet the needs of our community.
- Embedding the University of Aberdeen values and supporting behaviours at all levels

6 MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

6.1 The success of the strategy will be measured through:

- Increased staff response / satisfaction rates on biennial surveys
- Ad hoc tailored pulse surveys (i.e. re communications, wellbeing) around staff engagement events
- Improvements in the student experience of interactions with staff
- Reduction in sickness absence

- Staff retention improvements and improvement on feedback from exit surveys
- Sector level benchmarking (e.g. through Healthy Working Lives survey results)
- Establishment and implementation of structured change management processes
- Successful contribution and reward schemes celebrating e.g. exceptional activity or long service
- Healthy Working Lives accreditations

7 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 7.1 The University management will nurture a culture of valuing staff, recognising contributions fairly and developing staff. This will help meet the university aims of being a progressive institution where staff and students thrive.
- 7.2 Staff will benefit from improved communication and greater clarity around their contributions to University strategic goals and hence have a greater sense of personal fulfilment.
- 7.3 Improving and supporting leadership capability within the University through appropriate training, supportive processes and procedures.
- 7.4 Improved collaboration and knowledge sharing across the University leading to increased innovations in learning and teaching and ultimately greater social, cultural and economic impact in everything we do.

8 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 8.1 The Employee Engagement Working Group and its constituent sub groups will have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this strategy and action plans.
- 8.2 Progress reports and papers will be presented to PNCC, UMG, SMT, Operating Board and Court as appropriate.

Employee Engagement action plan 2016-2018

Employee Engagement action plan 2016-2018

Theme : Belonging and Community				
Key Issues identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining community – different views and not a one size fits all approach • Understand existing divisions and explore ways of bringing people together in working towards our shared goal • Motivating staff – with challenges around trust, empowerment, feeling valued, feedback and effective communications. • Being nice to each other as cohabitants of the community 				
GOALS	ACTIONS	TEAM RESPONSIBLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE	PROGRESS
Identify common staff values that build a sense of community	Articulate and issue a university value statement.	EEWG	May, 2017	People values approved by court and presented in this strategy.
Understand the best way to communicate with our staff	Run an internal communications survey and communicate summary result to staff.	External relations	March, 2017	Comms survey run in November 2016 and summary result published on the ezine.
	Draft and communicate an updated internal communications strategy	External relations	June, 2017	In progress
Build a community where staff feel trusted, valued and are motivated to contribute optimally	Develop and promote a staff mentoring scheme	Staff Development	Ongoing	Staff mentoring scheme launched and promoted in 2016
	Train staff and managers on effective feedback	Staff Development	Quarterly	Giving effective feedback sessions currently run quarterly and are also part of the suite of management programmes.

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	Promote collaboration and knowledge sharing through extended networking events	CAD/Staff Development	March, 2018	
	Identify and promote staff/university community events using 'What's On and Events pages' and Apps	Events	Ongoing	The ezine and other media are being utilised to promote events on a regular basis.
	Engage with all employee network groups on a quarterly basis to gain a sense of priorities and issues	Equality & Diversity/HR	Quarterly	All information collated from the various network groups will be reported quarterly to UMG with clear associated priorities and actions.
	Review the annual review process to ensure this remains fit-for-purpose	HR	June, 2018	This matter will be progressed through the Policy Review Group
Theme : Trust, Support and Engagement				
Key issues identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to engage staff when trust is limited • Lack of awareness of existing support and facilities – poor communication • Poor standardisation and lack of consistency around good practice e.g. Annual Review • Differential access to support and facilities e.g. ASV • Avoiding a micro-management culture • Recognising and acknowledging teams and individuals 				
GOALS	ACTIONS	TEAM RESPONSIBLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE	PROGRESS
Build a culture of engagement and ongoing relationship with staff throughout their career	Develop and implement enhanced Induction scheme to include local level integration. ("Know your University" Fair) twice a year.	Staff Development working with School Admin Officers	Jan, 2018	A review of the current induction provision is being undertaken. Additional functionality through media such as Page Tiger will be utilised to improve the induction experience.

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<p>Develop and review support provided to staff and managers around engagement activities and behaviours</p>	<p>Provide open, clear and honest dialogue with staff</p> <p>Launch a 'Buddy Scheme' to improve integration of new staff relocating and for existing staff to network.</p> <p>Develop and promote family focused deals at the ASV</p> <p>Review and identify award/recognition schemes for teams and individuals, both Academic and Professional Services</p>	<p>SMT, Section and School leads, Communications</p> <p>Staff Development working with School Admin Officers</p> <p>Health, Safety & Wellbeing/Sports & Exercise Team</p> <p>HR Specialist Services</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>August, 2017</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>June, 2018</p>	<p>Principal, VPs and Directors holding public meetings and attending schools</p> <p>Completed. Buddy scheme launched August 2017.</p> <p>Initial discussions have commenced with ASV to look at enhancing communication regarding family events.</p> <p>A review of the current awards offered (eg teaching awards, long service awards) will be undertaken.</p>
<p>Provide an enabling and empowering environment for staff</p>	<p>Introduce targeted pulse surveys to ascertain progress against actions or to assess staff views on a course of action. Includes a firm commitment to deliver results within 2 months of completion.</p> <p>Line managers and staff trained to set appropriate objectives and monitor progress against targets</p> <p>Continue to ensure clear communication in relation to the Institutional KPIs and progress towards delivery</p>	<p>HR/Comms /IT</p> <p>HR Partners/ Staff Development</p> <p>Planning/HR</p>	<p>May 2017/ Ongoing</p> <p>April, 2017</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Comms survey completed November 2016.HR Service survey has been rolled out Nov 2017.</p> <p>Completed. The Academic Line Management training and other management development programmes support the delivery of this action.</p> <p>On Target</p>

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	Develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy and supporting resources	MHWG	November 2016	Completed. Mental Health Strategy developed and launched October 2016. Mental health working group meeting quarterly. Mental health adviser recruited
Theme: Communication and Consistency				
Key issues identified:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about lack of transparency – Information not filtering down to staff • University website – hard to find information • Staff survey – delay in communicating results. Timely communication. • Suggestions boxes - Improved use of you said/ we did approach • Need to recognise staff contributions through 'Getting to know' articles. 				
GOALS	ACTIONS	TEAM RESPONSIBLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE	PROGRESS
Promote open, timely and transparent communication to staff	Clear management commitment to communicate changes in a timely manner. Nominate/appoint local communications champions at school level	SMT/ UMG Heads of School/SAO's/ Comms	Ongoing May, 2017	Completed. Local communications champions nominated
Make information available in an accessible format	Continue on-going review of Staffnet whilst seeking and incorporating staff feedback	Communications	September, 2018	Ongoing review
Provide innovative approaches for staff to showcase work/ achievements and build a sense of community	Incorporate 'Getting to know' articles into the ezine where staff can share their contributions and receive acknowledgement from their peers.	Communications	November, 2016	Completed. Getting to know articles have now become a regular feature of the ezine since late 2016.

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Theme: Facilities and Resources				
Key issues identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of social spaces for staff • Need for appropriate equipment and facilities to perform staff roles • Workload and culture – impact on engagement • OneSource – annual review and link to development opportunities • Identifying what staff want and communicating • Lack of management buy in and myths around taking time out during the day for social and wellbeing activities. • Flexibility – disparity across the university 				
GOALS	ACTIONS	TEAM RESPONSIBLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE	PROGRESS
Build awareness of existing and planned staff resources	Develop improved line management support and guidance on how staff access university resources	HR/ IT	June, 2018	Continue to communicate details for staff to access management support and guidance
	Draw up a calendar of events when staff can come together in an informal setting to share experiences	Events/ CAD	May, 2018	
Improve availability of shared staff spaces to encourage a sense of community and shared purpose	Run an annual staff benefits fayre	HR	June, 2018	
	Identify and share best practice in the use of university resources specifically the allocation of staff space	Estates	Ongoing	

Employee Engagement action plan 2016-2018

Theme: Feedback and Acting on recommendations				
Key issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of suggestion boxes, how they are used and how staff feedback is addressed. Again, 'You said, We Did' approach. • Good senior management engagement overall but sometimes defensive. Open sessions and more consultation to be encouraged. • Need to show staff feedback is valued to change a culture of disengagement. • More ways of sharing information and encouraging open communication. Possibility of feedback webpages to be explored. • Managing feedback more proactively e.g. Poor example with staff survey • Taking actions forward and assessing outcomes. 				
GOALS	ACTIONS	TEAM RESPONSIBLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE	PROGRESS
Foster and support greater employee voice in decision making	Review and recommend opportunities for corporate listening and ensuring feedback and its implementation is communicated effectively	Communications/ HR partners	May, 2017	Additional informal networks are in place to enable effective communication with employee representatives
	Continue ongoing engagement with existing employee representation eg through PNCC, JCCRA and PRG	HR	Ongoing	
	Propose a staff forum to support staff engagement and consultation	HR	June, 2018	
Demonstrate a commitment to valuing and acting on staff feedback	Relaunch staff suggestion boxes and incorporate with other means of collecting staff feedback e.g. web based feedback pages	Communications	March, 2018	
	Operate a staff survey once every two years with a commitment to increase response rates and improve on measures of staff wellbeing and engagement	HR	November, 2017	
	Provide monthly updates on staff feedback and actions being taken by management.	Communications	April, 2017	

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	Encourage completion of Britain's Healthiest workplace survey 2017, and monitor progress against 2016 outcomes	Health Safety and Wellbeing	May- July 2017	Survey issued by ezine link in April 2017 and email from heads of schools/section in May 2017
Theme: Change Management				
<p>Key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to identify and articulate institutional values. Involve staff throughout the process • Review existing change management protocol - broader definition of change. • Need for mandatory change management training • Mechanism for rewarding staff for exceptional service • Clarity around change management style • Need to carry out a post change review and assess impacts. • Calendar of change – assist foreseeing change, assessing impact and communicating transparently. 				
GOALS	ACTIONS	TEAM RESPONSIBLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE	PROGRESS
Communicate change initiatives in a timely and sensitive manner	Review existing change management protocol providing additional guidance to staff and line managers.	HR/ Employee representatives	June, 2018	This matter will be progressed through the Policy Review Group
	Provide Change management training for line managers and supervisors, with attention to timing of change and minimising negative responses	HR Partners/Staff Development	September, 2017	Ongoing. The Academic Line Management training and other management development programmes support the delivery of this action.
Support staff through periods of change and manage the impact of change	Provide Stress avoidance training for line managers and staff	HR Partners/Staff Development	December, 2017	Material developed and schedule of training to be published

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Review change initiatives and communicate impact and benefits	Provide Scottish Mental Health First aid training to staff	HR Specialist Services	Ongoing	Twelve Sessions have been delivered with over 150 staff and students trained. Further sessions are scheduled for delivery.
	Implement a 24hr employee helpline and review current Occupational Health provision	HR	November, 2016	PAM Assist appointed as University EAP provider in November 2016. Current Occ health provision reviewed
	Develop and implement a mechanism for teams and the organisation to reward exceptional service	HR	June, 2018	
	Nominate local level Change partners who can support the process of change and evaluate impact	HR/HoS	June, 2018	