

University of Aberdeen

Menopause Policy - Staff and Students

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The University of Aberdeen, in line with its strategic plan Aberdeen 2040, is committed to creating positive and inclusive working and learning environments. The University will care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential.
- 1.2 The University aims to raise awareness of the menopause, its symptoms, and the impact it can have on work and study. The University endeavours to create environments where staff and students feel confident to raise issues about their menopause symptoms and to ask for support. Managers/student support staff will be empowered to provide the appropriate help and advice.
- 1.3 The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of individuals experiencing menopause are in work. Research shows that staff are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, or to ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.
- 1.4 This Policy provides guidance for members of staff, managers, students and those who support them on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work and University.

2. Principles

- Staff and students experiencing the menopause will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- To raise awareness across the University community of menopause-related issues at work and study.
- Managers/student support staff will be assisted in supporting staff and students who are experiencing menopause and associated symptoms and enable them to access the support they need.
- Staff and students should be encouraged to openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Information about the menopause and the University's policies and practices will be freely available and accessible at the University.
- Confidential conversations on menopause should be supported.

- Managers will be informed about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support staff at work.
- Personal tutors will be informed about the potential symptoms of the menopause and how they can support students with their studies.
- Staff and students will be enabled to attend work and university and contribute their best whilst experiencing menopausal symptoms.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all University staff and students.

4. Definitions

4.1 **Menopause** is when periods stop (for 12 months), and the end of the natural reproductive life is reached. Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 39 and 59 with the average being 51 in the UK, however, it can be earlier due to surgery, illness or other reasons. The symptoms typically last for 4 years but can last up to 12 years.

4.2 **Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when changes may be experienced, and sometimes severe associated menopausal symptoms begin. Perimenopause can occur years before menopause and is often when most support is required.

4.3 **Post menopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when there has not been a period for twelve consecutive months.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

5.1 Not every individual will have every symptom or need help or support. However, 75% of those affected do experience some symptoms, and 25% of those symptoms could be classed as severe.

5.2 Typical symptoms of menopause include:

- Psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- Sleeplessness
- Fatigue
- Hot flushes (sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest)
- Night sweats (hot flushes that happen during the night)
- Irregular periods and/or bleeding that is very heavy and unpredictable
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Headaches
- Weight gain

- Palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)
 - Skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)
- 5.3 The University recognises that menopause is experienced differently by individuals and therefore the impact of the menopause may differ greatly for each person. Individuals who identify themselves as non-binary, transgender or from intersex communities may experience menopausal symptoms, and their menopause may be different.
- 5.4 The menopause is a natural part of life; however it is not always an easy transition. The University recognises that appropriate support can help the individual to manage this transition. Whilst not everyone experiences symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work and study.

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1 It is important that everyone understands what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. This is not just an issue for those who experience the menopause, all staff and students should be aware of the potential impact of the menopause.

6.2 Staff

All members of staff will be encouraged to:

- Take personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing, seeking medical advice if necessary to support self-management, with support from the University, managers and colleagues, to help manage symptoms
 - Be open about how the menopause is impacting on them in conversations with managers/HR and Occupational Health. This will enable appropriate support and guidance to be provided
 - Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment
 - Be willing to support their colleagues
 - Be understanding of necessary adjustments/changes at work which have been agreed to support their colleagues as a result of their menopausal symptoms
- 6.3 If a member of staff prefers to speak to someone other than their line manager, they may choose to speak to another line manager (may be outwith their team) or to HR, the Wellbeing Team or their union representative.
- 6.4 [Line Managers](#) (see Appendix 1 for Managers' Guidance)

Line managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance
- Being prepared to have discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating it sensitively and professionally

- Considering, with the member of staff, how best they can be supported including discussing any requests to accommodate changes at work that may be helpful to manage symptoms
- Ensuring ongoing dialogue and review dates
- Ensuring that agreed actions are implemented
- Where changes at work/agreed adjustments are accommodated but are unsuccessful or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager may:
 - Discuss a referral to Occupational Health (OH) for further advice
 - Refer the member of staff to Occupational Health
 - Review Occupational Health advice and implement recommendations where reasonably practicable
 - Update the actions agreed as part of any discussion and continue to review - please refer to Appendix 1a
 - Consider temporary changes to the work environment or working arrangements
 - In accordance with the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, best practice advice indicates that the staff member should be advised to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance. However, an OH referral can still be made even if the staff member has not discussed this with their GP.

6.5 All students are encouraged to:

- Take personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing, seeking medical advice if necessary to support self-management, with support from the University, to help manage symptoms
- Be open about how the menopause is impacting on them in conversations with student support and personal tutors. This will enable appropriate support and guidance to be provided
- Contribute to a respectful and productive learning environment
- Be willing to support their peers
- Be understanding of necessary adjustments/changes at university which have been agreed to support their classmates as a result of their menopausal symptoms

6.6 Occupational Health

The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with latest research
- Signpost staff and managers to appropriate sources of help and advice (refer to Appendix 2 for more information)

- Provide support and advice to HR and Line Managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments/changes at work, if required
- Monitor referrals due to menopause symptoms, and provide additional signposting, where required

6.7 Human Resources (HR)

HR will:

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy and Guidance;
- Provide guidance to staff who have approached HR directly
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this Policy

6.8 Student Support

Student Support will:

- Offer support and recommend reasonable adjustments for learning if required.
- Review adjustments as required with the student.
- Signpost students to appropriate sources of help and advice (refer to Appendix 2 for more information)

7. Examples of support or adjustments

Some possible support or adjustments may include:

7.1 Flexible working arrangements

Consideration of the following for those experiencing severe symptoms:

- Where the role permits, allow staff to work around their symptoms
- Allowing time to rest and make the time up later
- Permitting occasional/additional home working when symptoms are severe
- Adjusting start and finish times
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks or increased breaks during the working day
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- Easy access to changing/washing facilities
- Allowing regular breaks during meetings, especially longer meetings
- Possible extensions to student assignments

7.2 Working environment

Consideration of the following:

- Facilitating a more comfortable working environment taking into account heating and lighting
- Making desk fans easily available
- Reviewing whether ventilation is sufficient or can be improved

- Consideration of the proximity of washrooms
- Use of campus prayer/contemplation facilities as quiet space

7.3 Uniforms

Consideration of the following:

- Where uniforms are provided consider natural fibres where possible
- Provision of additional uniforms
- Adjustment of uniform requirements

7.4 The University recognises that the menopause can be perceived differently by our diverse communities. Considering an individual in their own circumstances and supporting them according to their particular needs is good practice.

8. Sources of Additional Support

- [Human Resources](#)
- [Wellbeing Team](#)
- [Mental Health First Aid Advisers \(MHFAs\)](#)
- [Workplace Dignity Network](#)
- [Multi-Faith Chaplaincy](#)
- [Trade Unions](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#) - provides access to 24/7 telephone counselling for all members of staff
- [Student Helpline](#) - provides free-of-charge immediate emotional support as well as information and advice on a range of 'life' and wellbeing matters.
- [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\) guidelines](#). These explain how your GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer you
- The National Health Service provides [an overview of menopause](#)
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer [dedicated menopause information](#)
- [Premature Ovarian Insufficiency \(POI\) information and support on very early menopause](#)
- [NHS information on hysterectomy](#). This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy.
- A Government Report '[The effects of menopause transition on women's economic participation in the UK](#)' July 2017 lead author Joanna Brewis, researched by the University of Leicester
- [Henpicked](#). This site provides information on managing menopause, and an insight into women's stories
- [Menopausematters](#)
- [Rock My Menopause](#)

9. Related policies and guidance

This policy is linked to:

- Dignity at Work and Study Toolkit (awaiting approval);
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Flexible Working Guidance;
- Staff and Student Wellbeing Strategy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Sickness Absence Management Procedure
- Management of Work-Related Stress Policy

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 Managers' Guidance For Staff Discussions about the menopause

This details recommendations to support symptomatic staff who may need advice and support.

Appendix 1a Confidential Staff Discussion Template - Blank

This template is to assist managers in recording conversations, and agreed actions and adjustments, with members of staff.

Appendix 1b Confidential Staff Discussion Template – Example

This template has some suggestions for the questions to ask and type of information to record on it.

Appendix 2 Menopause Advice Sheet

A guide for staff and students on how to have constructive conversations about menopause with their doctor.

Approved 1 November 2022