

Nurturing Growth

University College Cork Staff Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2027

The University is committed to providing a supportive and healthy work environment where all staff feel engaged and supported to achieve their potential. UCC recognises that the experience we have at work can have a significant impact on our wellbeing and understands the importance of promoting good health and wellbeing. The University has identified wellbeing as a key enabler in Securing our Future - UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

This Staff Wellbeing Strategy supports that plan by setting out the vision, mission and goals to prioritise staff wellbeing over the next 2 years. The aim of this strategy is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of staff by integrating wellbeing into policies, practices and procedures across UCC.

Our vision is to create a wellbeing culture across the University where everyone can thrive personally and professionally.

Our mission is to improve the overall employee experience by integrating wellbeing across the University to create the right conditions for all employees to perform at their best to support themselves and the strategic aims of the University.

Staff Wellbeing and Development and the UCC People & Culture Sub Committee will oversee the implementation of this strategy to ensure a university wide approach.

This strategy will strengthen the existing staff wellbeing supports and develop new ones to improve the overall staff experience. As the future of work changes this strategy acknowledges the impact of blended working and the opportunities and challenges this presents for staff wellbeing. This strategy highlights the importance of achieving a good work life balance with a new model of blended working.

This strategy is informed and guided by national and international strategies including; WHO Healthy Workplace Framework, Healthy Campus framework and Healthy Ireland Workplace Frameworks and Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Framework.

This strategy is based on the following wellbeing pillars: Physical, Mental, Social and Financial Wellbeing. The strategy is underpinned by the University's commitment to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Strategic Aims

- To provide leadership to prioritise staff wellbeing across the University to improve overall wellbeing.
- To embed a culture of staff wellbeing across the University in the development of systems, policies and resources to improve overall staff experience.
- To provide managers and leaders with skills and knowledge to support staff wellbeing.
- To provide timely, proactive and evidence-based staff wellbeing support by raising awareness of existing supports and adopting new supports.
- To develop relationships with key internal and external stakeholders to provide support and expert advice.

Key Principles

The Staff Wellbeing Strategy is grounded in the following principles:

- **Proactivity:** Taking preventative measures to address potential wellbeing issues before they arise.
- **Inclusivity:** Ensuring all staff feel included and valued, regardless of their contractual status or role.
- **Confidentiality:** Respecting staff privacy and handling personal information with discretion.
- **Support:** Provision of a visible and comprehensive range of supports for staff wellbeing needs and integrate wellbeing supports in all leadership development programmes.

- **Evidence Based:** Supporting staff needs as identified through surveys and feedback.
- **Engagement:** Actively encouraging and involving staff in the development of wellbeing initiatives.

Key Pillars

Mental Health & Wellbeing

To enable a respectful culture where staff feel comfortable discussing mental wellbeing challenges we will:

- Equip leaders and managers with the skills to support their own wellbeing and that of their team.
- Design programmes on how to conduct wellbeing conversations to support managers to identify and respond to wellbeing issues.
- Train managers to recognise the signs of workplace stress and take action to resolve same in a timely manner.
- Empower all to develop good self-care by making resources easily accessible via a Staff Wellbeing Hub.
- Work in partnership with our Employee Assistance Provider to provide clinical support as required and with Occupational Health to provide expert support and recommendations.
- Recruit and provide training for a network of staff wellbeing champions/mental health first aiders in each faculty and directorate across the University.

Social Wellbeing

To provide opportunities and support for employees to improve their social wellbeing we will:

- Support managers in understanding the range of policies which are available to support work life balance including the Blended Working Policy and the Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect and Athena Swan core meeting times.
- Improve relationships across the university by nurturing and supporting employees by modelling good practice.
- Encourage personal growth through supporting the development of interests, hobbies, and skills development and becoming involved in the University community.
- Provide opportunities for staff to rest and socialise away from work and to engage in wellbeing activities.
- Support managers to build a culture of social engagement locally to create a sense of belonging.
- Provide effective training to support time management and work prioritisation to enable good work-life balance.

Physical Health & Wellbeing

To provide opportunity and support for all employees to increase physical health and wellbeing we will:

- Work in partnership with the Mardyke Arena and UCC Sports and Social Clubs to offer classes and other activities including physical health promoting sessions.
- Provide regular health screenings and health advice via the Embark platform including the promotion of free Digital Gyms.
- Support managers to integrate physical health and wellbeing initiatives locally.
- Support the Health and Safety Office in growing awareness in relation to workspace ergonomics and practices which can prevent physical strain with a strong focus on healthy blended working.
- Engage with Occupational Health to provide recommendations and accommodations on physical health and wellbeing to support staff return or to stay at work.
- Support the implementation of the Healthy Campus Charter and Framework.

Financial Wellbeing

To support the financial wellbeing of employee will:

- Provide a financial wellbeing programme to improve financial literacy around financial planning including key transition to retirement.
- Promote the range of staff benefits available to improve overall financial wellbeing.
- Signpost staff to support financial wellbeing.
- Encourage staff to avail of support for their financial wellbeing including access to Income Continuance Plans.

Measuring Impact and Success

We are committed to continuous improvement and will evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy by creating mechanisms to assess and review staff wellbeing activities. We will measure the success of this strategy by using data to continually improve and adapt wellbeing initiatives and will conduct regular assessments of staff wellbeing through surveys.

We will use the following indicators to measure our success:

- The percentage of work-related absences year on year
- EAP engagement levels
- Employee engagement levels
- Analysis of annual Staff Survey to identify overall staff wellbeing
- Analysis of the numbers signing up to staff wellbeing and development initiatives
- Number of referrals to Occupational Health
- Numbers of managers completing wellbeing training
- Numbers engaging with online resources and staff wellbeing hub.
- Number availing of preventative screenings
- Provide regular communication to staff wellbeing activities.

Staff Wellbeing Implementation Plan

A detailed implementation plan will be developed for this strategy and will include:

- Ensuring a university wide approach to staff wellbeing overseen by Staff Wellbeing and Development and the UCC People & Culture Sub Committee.
- Creating and implementing a communications plan to promote existing staff supports highlighting prevention and intervention strategies.
- Support the implementation of Healthy Campus Framework and Charter.
- Development of a staff wellbeing hub where all resources are easily accessible.
- Introduction of wellbeing toolkits for managers and staff.
- Provision of wellbeing training to support new and established managers and leaders.
- Recruit a network of staff wellbeing champions/mental health first aiders across the University and deliver champions/mental health first aid training programme.
- Consultation with stakeholders on the development of new staff wellbeing policies.
- Review of policies and procedures to ensure staff wellbeing is embedded throughout.
- Development of an annual calendar of events including Staff Wellbeing Week and ensure alignment with organisational goals.
- Using evidence-based models of workplace wellbeing to promote good health and wellbeing.
- Monitoring trends and data quarterly to provide effective wellbeing supports and plans and shape future interventions.
- Evaluating the impact of the new Blended Work policy on staff wellbeing.
- Provision of targeted support for staff on new policies including Fertility, Treatment, Domestic Violence and Menopause Policies.
- Build relationships and benchmark against other institutions and stakeholders including Healthy Ireland, HEA and other universities.
- Continually evaluating, reviewing and improving staff wellbeing including seeking feedback from staff via pulse surveys.