



## UCC Staff Wellbeing Plan 2012 – 2017

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – The UCC Staff Wellbeing Programme – At a Glance

UCC is committed to enhancing staff welfare and positive wellbeing in the University and this plan has been prepared to cement that commitment. The activities identified will benefit staff by improving the quality of the workplace experience. The plan will also help to improve staff engagement enabling schools and departments to flourish and achieve their full potential.

Six wellbeing objectives are being suggested as the framework for the five year programme:

Objectives	How?	Who?	When?
1 Achieve senior level commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a UCC staff wellbeing charter</li> </ul>	-President and UMTO	Phase 1
2 Improve the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives through the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidate existing resources</li> </ul>	-Mardyke Sports Arena -Chaplaincy -Student Health -Student Counselling and Development	Phase 1
3 Create greater awareness of supports available throughout the University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display of staff wellbeing logo on websites and in “wellness centres”</li> <li>Visible link to staff wellbeing web-portal on all UCC desktops</li> <li>Circulation of information materials on the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)</li> </ul>	-All University areas that contribute to staff wellbeing  -Computer Centre  -Positive People Company (EAP Provider)	Phase 1
4 Provide staff with on-going support, education and information on a wide range of health and wellbeing issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff wellbeing web-portal</li> <li>Provision of a range of health and wellbeing events</li> <li>Integration of wellbeing knowledge into existing developmental programmes</li> </ul>	-HR -Internal experts working in the University -HR	Phase 1-2
5 Disseminate best practice by creating a co-ordinated and integrated network of University wellbeing champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with other wellbeing promoting activities</li> <li>Yearly exhibition of in-house activities</li> <li>Creation of a database on the staff wellbeing web-portal</li> </ul>	-Health Promoting University (HPU) initiative - Academics/Researchers in the College of Medicine and Health / College of Science Engineering and Food Science -Current staff networks	Phase 1-2
6 Promote behaviours to enhance staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of staff recognition award schemes</li> <li>Creation of more opportunities for staff dialogue</li> <li>Provision of an information series to educate staff on University policies</li> <li>Create the opportunity for learning about effective management styles</li> </ul>	-Staff Enhancement and Professional Development Committee (SDEC) -Office of the Vice-President for External Relations -UMTO members  -HR	Phase 1-3

## **SECTION 1 – The UCC Staff Wellbeing Programme**

### **1.1 Achieve senior level commitment**

Good staff welfare and positive well-being are essential aspects of a motivated, engaged and productive workforce. The UCC management team recognise the important contribution these activities can make to the student and staff experience and have committed to the development of an improved scheme for staff welfare and wellbeing in the University operational plan.

The demonstration of this commitment will be reinforced through the preparation of a Staff Wellbeing Charter that will be signed by the President and all members of the University Management Team (Operations). The Charter shall identify the principles upon which the staff wellbeing programme shall be built and how the programme will be supported.

### **1.2 Improve the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives through the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships**

There are lots of activities already taking place on campus that feed either directly or indirectly into positive staff wellbeing. These activities contribute to many of the different aspects of wellbeing. For example; emotional support is provided by the Employee Assistance Programme, physical health activities are promoted through the Mardyke Sports Arena and the Staff Sports and Social Club and good mental health is promoted through the Student Health Service on-line Computer Aided Lifestyle Management Programme (CALM) and also through the mindfulness campaign run by the Chaplaincy.

Identifying possible linkages with areas where expertise already exists is key to the foundation and the long-term viability of a wellbeing programme. Tapping into established resources and developing partnerships will help the programme to grow quickly and possibly have more of an immediate impact on the staff of UCC. The approach presented here of involving staff from across the University is also in-line with overall aim of the wellbeing programme; i.e. to develop a series of interventions identified by staff for staff. With activities emerging from range of different directions and perspectives the series will provide a more holistic wellbeing experience to staff as well as the capability to achieve impact at multiple levels within the University.

### **1.3 Create greater awareness of supports available throughout the University**

As aforementioned there are lots of wellbeing supports available to staff on campus. The results of the staff wellbeing survey have confirmed the level of awareness surrounding these opportunities. Some initiatives, particularly on-line programmes, were found to require more attention. The initiatives that were reported to receive a lot of interest on an on-going basis, such as the UCC Advantage Programme, could be used to attract staff to the other resources that don't receive as much attention. This could be achieved through the promotion of all interventions as a suite of resources rather than stand-alone interventions. This new approach could facilitate the development of a good basic knowledge of the full range of supports to staff.

This promotional campaign could be further enhanced by increasing the visibility of the staff wellbeing web-portal. The display of the new staff wellbeing icon on as many websites featuring staff wellbeing supports as possible and in all “wellness centres” would greatly assist with the goal of

the creation of greater awareness. Activity in this area has already begun with the display of the Staff Wellbeing icon in the reception area of the Mardyke Sports Arena.

Direct mail of staff wellbeing information/promotional materials to all schools and departments for display on noticeboards as well as the continuance of circulation of information via e-mail can complement the other awareness raising activities suggested in this plan.

#### **1.4 Provide staff with on-going support, education and information on a wide range of health and wellbeing issues**

In their response to the survey, staff requested further information and support on a range of health and wellbeing subjects including mental health (stress, anxiety and depression), physical health and nutrition. Information and assistance has been delivered to staff on general health issues in the past through a range of lunch-time seminars, exhibitions and clinics organised by the HR Department. Feedback from the previous programmes of activity has been very positive so more of these activities could be included in the new 2012 - 2017 staff wellbeing programme.

Building on the theme of consolidating existing resources and creating mutually beneficial partnerships, in-house academic and research staff with expertise in various areas of health could be approached to share their knowledge and experience with staff via these lunch-time seminars. As part of their engagement they could be invited to produce a short article for the staff wellbeing web-portal to ensure that those that cannot make lunch-time seminars would not be excluded from the wellbeing programme. This approach would provide staff with direct access to experts, an on-going staff wellbeing educational programme for the University and also attract staff to the staff wellbeing web-portal.

#### **1.5 Disseminate best practice by creating a co-ordinated and integrated network of University well-being champions**

University wellbeing champions already exist in the University. These are the staff members that have a personal and/or professional interest in wellbeing and they volunteer their time to activities that contribute to better health and wellbeing on campus. This definition also includes staff members that go beyond the confines of their own school/department to volunteer on University committees such as the Staff Sports and Social Club Organising Committee or the Health Promoting University Committee for example.

Through the identification of a network of University well-being champions a roadmap of activities will emerge that can be captured in the new Staff Wellbeing Web-Portal. The promotion of this on-line directory of expertise to staff and their activities will help to grow wellbeing initiatives from the grassroots up. Capturing this good practice and promoting it to other staff via the staff wellbeing web-portal will embed positive staff wellbeing values across the organisation. The sharing of this knowledge may also encourage others to join the programme and provide some guidance for the practical application of wellbeing initiatives for emerging well-being champions in the University.

A yearly exhibition of all of this expertise and their initiatives could be organised to reinforce the importance of positive wellbeing to good work/life balance and the contribution of these well-being champions to the staff experience in UCC.

## 1.6 Promote behaviours to enhance staff engagement

The survey results suggest that staff in UCC would like greater support by management, more assistance with building robust relationships and better clarity around roles.

To achieve these goals UCC needs to consider the gaps in the current structures, how they are affecting staff and how they could be filled. Further investigation is required over the course of this five year programme so additional activities may emerge that are not captured in the current plan.

What is clear at this stage though is that management need access to the tools to be able to provide greater support to staff. A lot of work has been achieved by the HR Department on creating the opportunities for those with people management responsibilities to form networks and learn about effective management styles within the existing menu of leadership development programmes. Coaching and the creation of trusting relationships could be further enhanced through these programmes for management to apply to their day to day interactions with staff.

Information on the correct application of policy can also assist with the management of an area. All policies of the University are available on the UCC internet but education on the application of these policies could warrant further attention. With this in mind and in relation to the University's human resource policies in particular, the HR Department is aiming to offer more regular briefings to staff on the purpose and contribution of various human resource policies. This model could be promoted to other areas that produce policies essential to the operation of the University.

To establish a guideline of expected behaviour, it is important to capture those activities that enhance staff engagement. Award schemes such as the University Staff Recognition Awards Scheme, the Presidents Awards for Teaching and Learning and the UCC Research Awards scheme identify staff behaviours that provide an exceptional contribution to the University. By capturing these experiences and promoting them to others, staff can learn from these templates as to how best to navigate their way successfully through the University, facilitating the development of more robust working relationships. The staff mentoring scheme in UCC also plays an important role in the building of relationships and facilitating the strengthening of support networks available to staff. In addition, this scheme can help to clarify role expectations by providing space for dialogue with those that are further up the career ladder.

Providing a forum for the expression of thoughts and issues can lead to better trust relations. With all face to face interactions, all aspects of a problem/issue can be brought to the table and discussed at length until a solution is identified. This process can also act as an enabler to achieving buy-in to a programme or process. Providing an opportunity for sharing knowledge and experience, the message will be easier to convey and generate a greater understanding amongst the audience.

UCC needs to review how messages are communicated throughout the organisation and attempt to embed behaviour that will reinforce positive working relationships through both central and local level interventions. Further consideration needs to be given to this over the lifetime of the Staff Welfare and Positive Wellbeing Plan.

## SECTION 2 – Contextual Background – Our Journey to this Point

### 2.1 Introduction

Employee well-being is a subjective state that takes into account physical, social, emotional, environmental, developmental and occupational considerations all within the context of the workplace.<sup>1</sup> The composite of good well-being can therefore vary from one person to the next and it depends on the sum of all combined. Thus, the subjectivity of it makes the identification of a plan to meet the needs of all employees a distinct challenge.

UCC has attempted to prepare a robust approach to the support of staff welfare and well-being with a comprehensive analysis of all of its subjective dimensions. It was agreed to engage with staff from the very beginning to prepare a plan that's based on identified facts, needs and priorities. By engaging with this evidence-based approach it is anticipated that it will lead to evidence-based management, helping the University to respond accordingly and target resources in the right areas. While it will not be possible to address all influences on employee well-being, particularly those driven by external factors, such as financial reforms, this plan attempts to identify a pathway to address the main concerns of staff identified through the 2012 Staff Wellbeing Survey.

### 2.2 Background

*Section 6: Positive Staff Experience, 2011 – 2012 UCC Operational Plan* commits to the development and implementation of an improved scheme for staff welfare and wellbeing. The HR Department was tasked with this objective by the senior management team of the University. In-line with the spirit of staff engagement and wellbeing, the HR Department invited all staff to help identify the key themes upon which the plan would be framed.

UCC chose a questionnaire designed as part of an academic research project between the Health and Safety Authority and Managing Wellbeing Ltd (University of Ulster) to help generate the evidence for this plan. This questionnaire was chosen as:

1. It could be moulded sufficiently to capture the data required by UCC;
2. It could be applied anonymously and the information would be managed externally to UCC thereby assisting the confidentiality of the process;
3. There was minimal cost implications for the University and;
4. UCC's participation would assist with the advancement of research i.e. to establish a benchmark for psycho-social working conditions in Ireland.

The survey was administered in May 2012 and there were 1215 responses received from academic, administration, research, services and technical staff. This equates to approximately 45% of the total UCC workforce or 49% of FTE<sup>2</sup>.

The Biographical Breakdown of Respondents can be viewed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Breakdown of respondents**

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Derek Mowbray, Visiting Professor of Psychology at Northumbria University and Director of the Management Advisory Service and Organisation Health

<sup>2</sup> Based on a staff count of 2682 as at April 2012 or 2477.86FTE

## Breakdown of respondents

Gender	N	%
Female	743	65
Male	398	35
(29 unknown)		

Age Group	N	%
16-25	16	1
26-35	265	23
36-45	410	35
46-55	345	30
56-65	124	11
66 or older	6	-
(4 unknown)		

Occupational Type	N	%
Academia	361	31
Administration	490	42
Research	190	16
Services	53	5
Technician	69	6
(7 unknown)		

Department	N	%
Central Services/Admin	322	28
College of Arts	181	16
College of Business	108	9
College of Medicine	197	17
College of Science	233	20
Research Centre	119	10
(10 unknown)		

The information gathered from the survey along with the strategic goals identified by the University has been used to inform the direction of this plan. Feedback captured at focus groups in August 2012 and at the presentation to all staff on 16<sup>TH</sup> October 2012 has also been taken on board. It is envisaged that this plan shall follow the lead of the University strategic plan in terms of timelines for delivery and adaptability so it continues to be of relevance to staff in UCC.

### 2.3 The Evidence

In May 2012, all UCC staff were invited to participate in a Staff Wellbeing Survey. The aim of the survey was threefold:

- To identify the level of awareness of UCC wellbeing supports;
- To find out what the workplace stressors in UCC are and;
- To ascertain the areas of personal wellbeing where further support is required.

Staff were asked to log on to an online questionnaire hosted on an external website managed by Managing Wellbeing Ltd (University of Ulster). To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the process, demographic information requested was limited to gender, occupation and area of work i.e. in one of the four colleges, in central administration or in a research centre. All of the information

was sent directly via the on-line system to Managing Wellbeing Ltd and UCC was provided with anonymous group data in a management report at the end of the process.

The survey remained open for three weeks. To ensure maximum participation, staff were sent daily updates via e-mail about response rates. They were also given the option of answering some questions on personal health and wellbeing (which were integrated into the questionnaire) to get a personalised health and wellbeing report. The questionnaire was tailored to UCC and piloted in the HR Department beforehand. There were 65 multiple choice questions included in the final questionnaire and it took on average 12 minutes to complete.

The results of the survey were communicated to staff through focus groups in August 2012 and at an “open house” presentation on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

***A new Staff Wellbeing web portal has also been created to highlight future progress in the various phases of activity identified in this plan. The address is [www.ucc.ie/en/wellbeing](http://www.ucc.ie/en/wellbeing)***

## 2.4 Staff Consultation

The Staff Wellbeing Survey set a benchmark against which progress can be monitored. It also provides a vehicle through which a conversation can be initiated on the contribution of UCC to staff wellbeing on campus. The questionnaire allowed the conversation to focus on key performance indicators such as awareness of current supports, what activities or areas of inactivity are creating stressful situations in UCC and areas of personal wellbeing around which staff would like a UCC intervention. In other words, the survey has provided UCC with an agenda defined by staff for staff.

The presentation of the initial results from the survey continues the conversation started by the survey itself and the Staff Wellbeing web-portal provides an open channel of real-time communication by which the University can inform staff about progress against the goals set out in this document.

The Staff Bulletin Board e-zine will also provide a regular space for filtering progress to staff in UCC and it has been suggested to the Governing Body Committee on Staff that a sub-committee in the form of a staff welfare working group be established to assist with the achievement of this plan.

## 2.5 Survey Results

As aforementioned, there were 1,215 responses received from academic, administration, research, services and technical staff to the invitation to participate. This equates to approximately 45% of the total UCC workforce or 49% of FTE<sup>3</sup>. See Table Two for response rates by area.

***Table Two: Total Number of Responses by Area to the Staff Wellbeing Survey 2012***

Area	Responses	Total no of employees	%Rate
Central Services / Administration	322	650	49.5
College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences	181	330	55

<sup>3</sup> Based on a staff count of 2682 as at April 2012 or 2477.86FTE

College of Business and Law	108	200	54
College of Medicine and Health	197	364	54
College of Science, Engineering and Food Science	233	318	73
Research Centre	119	820	14.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1160*</b>	<b>2682</b>	<b>43%</b>

*\*Number of staff that identified their area of work in the survey.*

The substantial number of staff that responded to the survey including the input from all five categories of staff and from staff working in all six parts of the University, is an endorsement of the issues identified and can be taken as sufficiently representative of the total workforce in the University.

The questionnaire to gather the data was divided into three unique parts:

- a. Awareness of current University supports;
- b. Workplace stressors in UCC and;
- c. Further supports (including an optional section on lifestyle).

The presentation of the results is not based on priorities but follows the same structure as the questionnaire.

### **2.5(a) Awareness of Current University Supports**

There was significant awareness of the Staff Sports and Social Club, the UCC Advantage Programme (staff discount scheme), personal health and wellbeing events, the lunch-time walking routes, Creche Cois Laoi summer camp, commuting supports, staff meditation/mindfulness initiatives and the UCC campus bike scheme. There was also awareness about some or most of the activities included in the employee assistance programme. However, awareness was more limited around computer aided self-help programmes such as the Computer Aided Lifestyle Management (CALM) programme and the ePub. Healthy Living Initiatives was another area that staff expressed a need for further information. See Table Three for a breakdown of the level of awareness about current wellbeing supports.

*Table Three: Awareness of Current Wellbeing Supports*

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Aware %</b>	<b>Not Aware %</b>	<b>Aware of some aspects %</b>
ePub	15	85	
Computer Aided Lifestyle Management Programme (CALM)	17	83	
Healthy Living Initiatives	24	76	
UCC Sli Na Slainte Lunchtime Walking Routes	62	38	
UCC CampusBike	66	34	
Personal Health and Wellbeing Events Organised for Staff	71	29	
The Employee Assistance Programme	34	28	38

Staff Meditation/Mindfulness	32	27	41
Commuting	91	9	
The Advantage Scheme	96	4	
Staff Sports and Social Club	75	4	21

Regular reinforcement of the message via e-mail was identified by staff in the focus group sessions as key to building awareness of initiatives in UCC. It was also suggested that the identification of the positive deviants between initiatives with high awareness and those with low awareness could help the University to understand how to build awareness for all of the staff wellbeing supports. A positive association with the product was proposed as a possible reason for engagement so the creation of positive associations for all products could be an activity to work on as part of the Staff Wellbeing Plan.

The Staff Wellbeing web portal contains a directory of all of the staff wellbeing supports in the University. The University could direct staff to the web portal via the initiatives that staff value the most so awareness of all of them would increase. There would also need to be a “pull factor” included in the structure of the web-portal to encourage staff to log on to the site regularly. A possible discussion forum, an on-line health check or articles of interest on health and wellbeing issues could be included.

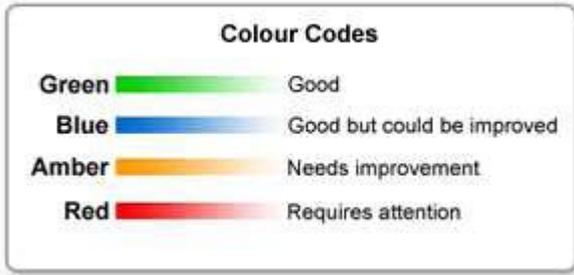
Finally, the “branding” of all of the wellbeing supports for staff in the University via the display of the Staff Wellbeing logo on e-mails, on websites and through the display of signage in wellness centres such as the Mardyke Sports Arena could assist with staff understanding of the wealth of wellbeing supports available to them as employees of the University.

### **2.5(b) The Workplace Stressors in UCC**

There were six categories of “workplace stressors” included in the questionnaire to help identify the main causes of stress in UCC. These categories are six key aspects of work which have been identified as causal factors where people have become affected by work related stress. To calculate the University’s scores, UCC responses were compared against the responses of the other 160,000 employees who have taken part in the research project.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the UK define them as “*Management Standards*” for work-related stress. They are all areas of work design that, if not properly managed can be associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity and increased sickness absence.

All of the questions included in the survey captured one or more aspects of these six areas and the scores were categorised and colour-coded in the results according to the HSE (UK) guidelines (see *Appendix A* for a further explanation of the scoring system and *Appendix B* for the scores from the UCC Staff Wellbeing Survey).



The six “*Management Standards*” are:

1. Demands;
2. Control;
3. Support;
4. Relationships;
5. Role and;
6. Change.

UCC staff responded as follows:

1. Demands: workload, work patterns, and the work environment

<b>Demands</b>
Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine
I have unachievable deadlines
I have to work very intensively
I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do
I am unable to take sufficient breaks
I am pressured to work long hours
I have to work very fast
I have unrealistic time pressures

2. Control: How much say the person has in the way they do their work

<b>Control</b>
I can decide when to take a break
I have a say in my own work speed
I have a choice in deciding how I do my work
I have a choice in deciding what I do at work
I have some say over the way I work
My working time can be flexible

3. Support: encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

<b>Manager Support</b>
I am given supportive feedback on the work I do
I can rely on my line manager to help me out with my work

I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me at work
I am supported through emotionally demanding work
My line manager encourages me at work

**Peer Support**

If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me
I can get help and support I need from colleagues
I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues
My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems

4. *Relationships*: promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

**Relationships**

I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words
There is friction or anger between colleagues
I am subject to bullying at work
Relationships at work are strained

5. *Role*: Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles

**Role**

I am clear what is expected of me at work
I know how to go about getting my job done
I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are
I am clear about the goals and objectives for my Department
I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation

6. *Change*: How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

**Change**

I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work
Staff are consulted about change at work
When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice

The following three areas emerged as the areas requiring the most attention from the University:

- i. **Management support;**
- ii. **Relationships at work and;**
- iii. **Role clarity.**

**2.5(b) i Management support**

The staff of UCC were of the view that more support is needed from management; a key element of the psychological contract between staff and an organisation i.e. where employees feel valued by

their employer, and the employer values (and is seen to value) their employees' contributions. Managers have a significant influence over the establishment of behaviours and attitudes as their actions, activities and words define what is acceptable and unacceptable practice in the workplace. They are the conduit of expected performance in the University and their reaction to successes and challenges can strongly influence the performance of a team.

Information on the correct application of policy can also assist with the management of an area. All policies of the University are available on the UCC internet but education on the application of these policies could warrant further attention. With this in mind and in relation to the University's human resource policies in particular, the HR Department is aiming to offer more regular briefings to staff on the purpose and contribution of various human resource policies. This model could be promoted to other areas that produce policies essential to the operation of the University.

While policies and procedures can provide general direction and outline organisational expectations, they cannot substitute for best practice people management skills. Many of the tools that have been available to managers in UCC in the past to develop and support their staff have in recent years come under intense pressure (as a result of cuts in exchequer financing) and have had to be curtailed. This has created new limitations on the resources available to managers requiring them to revisit the basic skills of management i.e. providing leadership and paying particular attention to the activities that can motivate staff. This authority can create a better working relationship with staff as matters are dealt with locally and swiftly.

As UCC is expecting managers to use the skills of staff engagement, there is an obligation on the University to provide opportunities for the development of these skills in the first place. Many of the different management tools available have been presented to managers in UCC through the Leadership Development Framework with the aim of communicating expected behaviours. The Department of Human Resources is committed to delivering an integrated leadership and development programme for staff in line with the University's commitment in the current Operational Plan 2011-2012 to '*produce and implement an updated plan for leadership development in Schools and Administrative units*'. The projects that are underway include:

1. Leadership Development programme for newly appointed Heads of School
2. Leadership Development for Senior Administrative Heads
3. Future Leaders Programme
4. Leadership Development for PIs
5. Leadership Development for Technical Professionals
6. ILM Level 5 Leadership Development Programme for Administrative Managers

A lot of work has been achieved by the HR Department on creating this suite of opportunities for those with people management responsibilities to empower them to form networks and learn about effective management styles. Coaching and the creation of trusting relationships are two areas that could be further enhanced through these programmes for management to apply to their day to day interactions with staff.

### **2.5(b)ii Relationships at work**

Relationships at work emerged from the survey as a cause of concern for academic, administrative, services and technical staff. It was slightly less of a concern for researchers but still identified as requiring attention.

A significant proportion of staff responded that they are experiencing a strain in working relationships, some of which seemed to be driven by organisational pressures on resources. I.e. *“absence of solidarity at University level”, “back-up support is provided grudgingly and with bad grace so if I need help I will ask others rather than the appointed person”, “being shouted at and expected to drop what you are doing so that you could be given a new task instead even though you are on a deadline with the previous task” and “changes due to cutbacks and uncertainty about my changing role as a result. No affirmation for increased effort and goodwill over and above the call of duty.”*

How to create better working relations is always a challenge even in prosperous times. The scale of the operation in UCC can make an organisational response even more of a difficult task, where the face to face understanding is missing and staff are known by their occupation or their location. The Staff Sports and Social Club are leading the charge to address the anonymity experienced by some staff in the University and to create a better sense of community and more effective relationships in UCC. Their attempts are generally well received with 75% of staff reporting in the survey that they have awareness of the Club. However, the work of the Club needs to be supported and enhanced through workplace based activities that build trust and honesty on a day to day basis and strengthen workplace relations.

As the Government tightens its grip on public finances, no doubt the employment relationship between UCC as an organisation and its staff is being challenged. In some cases staff expectations may still be focused on historical rather than on current economic realities.

Addressing this adversity requires an attempt at more open and transparent communication so staff can participate in dialogue and come to a new understanding. There are many layers to UCC and it can be difficult to communicate this message through all of them but as the relationship between staff and their direct line manager is the most resilient relationship of all, starting with a renewed emphasis on support at this level may help to empower and reinvigorate. In addition, from a strategic point of view strains in relationships between central and local services suggested as a stressor in the survey also need to be addressed; ideally from the top-down.

*“If central admin where to intrude less on our department-level activities life would be so much easier all round!!” “senior management are disconnected from realities for academic life at unit level, and obsessed with image at the expense of the kind of core academic values that should drive a University” and “constant new demands from ‘reform agenda’; too short deadlines to complete processes, time-consuming form filling, workload increases because of short staffing...”*

It is well documented that if a message is delivered directly by a senior manager, it not only enhances trust in them but by default enhances trust in an organisation. While the current practice of circulation of messages to all staff via e-mail or via the internet from the senior management team is effective in communicating with a large audience, it does little to build trust as it evades face

to face enquiry and the opportunity for open and honest dialogue. These are core elements of effective workplace relationships.

CIPD research has found that good communication leads to better employee engagement. The two key enablers in particular are, a) the opportunity for staff to feed upwards and b) that staff feel well informed<sup>4</sup>. The CIPD claims that these two activities promote better performance by staff, encourage employee retention and create more positive emotions towards the workplace.

The evidence presented in response to the Staff Wellbeing Survey suggests that opportunities for dialogue in UCC are falling short of the mark. As a result, it seems that trust and relationships in the University are being affected. To address these difficulties, the University needs to provide more opportunities for discussion and even revisit its roots to the time when UCC was a college and all staff were able to “put a face to a name”.

Electronic systems such as the “All Exchange Users” e-mail list have evolved over time to replace face-to-face discussion and have become the main avenue for both official staff notifications and informal discussions. As a result there is now an over reliance on it as an avenue for meeting the two key enablers of communication identified above. The downside of this new custom is that it limits the opportunities for relationships to form and flourish.

UCC needs to review how messages are communicated throughout the organisation and attempt to embed behaviour that will reinforce positive working relationships through both central and local level interventions. Further consideration needs to be given to this over the lifetime of the Staff Welfare and Positive Wellbeing Plan and to learn from successful initiatives such as the town hall addresses by the President and the Heads and Managers Forum, a regular event that keeps managers up-to-date on all activities in the University so they are better placed to advise and inform staff.

### **2.5(b) iii Role clarity**

Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload can all lead to an employee feeling stressed. The questions included in the survey assessed how well staff understand their role within the University. Staff expressed reservations about the clarity of departmental goals and objectives and how their work fits into the overall aim of the University. Clarity of expectations was also raised as an issue:

*“My role has changed – no discussion with me”, “Priorities keep changing due to increased workload and decreased staff. Management does try to communicate, but is unsure of what to prioritise” and “the twofold nature of my work. It is both administrative and academic. This means that I constantly feel that I fall between two stools. The administrative side of it also ensures that I am unable to develop the academic side. This causes me more frustration than anything else really. Also a lot of the admin work I do is only done as it is a legal requirement of the University. In other work I do is necessary but really undervalued.”*

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<sup>4</sup> CIPD, Communication, Factsheet, Revised January 2012

The Performance and Development Review System (PDRS) in UCC was introduced to “enable a staff member and the person(s) to whom one reports to agree together relevant objectives, which are clearly linked to the mission of the department/area and the University, and any associated support, which is needed to help attain the agreed objectives”.<sup>5</sup> In other words, it was developed to provide clarity to staff to help them to come to an understanding about their role and their contribution to UCC. The two year cycle is starting again in 2012 with a renewed emphasis on staff engagement via a new personalised IT support system.

While this PDRS can encourage two way communication, it also needs to be supported by other regular interventions that keep staff up-to-date on the expectations of their contribution to the University. It was suggested in one of the focus groups that expectations can come from students about the level of service delivery, not just from “management” and this extra contribution, while essential to the student experience on the one hand, is not generally recognised by the University on the other. This can create role ambiguity.

Policies have been put in place to define expectations but the procedural aspects and “raison d’être” for policies could possibly be explored more with staff at a local level in the University so they are clear on the content. Departments with responsibility for policy development could be encouraged to provide briefings to staff to explain the application of procedures that impact on staff in the University.

One of the activities proposed by staff in the focus groups was to promote more of the identified talent in the University to clarify the expectations of the organisation. By promoting those that receive awards, such as those that receive teaching and learning, research or the university staff recognition awards, it communicates a message to the rest of the staff about the contribution that the University expects its staff to make. It also presents a pathway which others can follow.

A lot of work has been put into the performance development review system in UCC. The value added to the employment experience and the explanation of roles through this system is something that could be communicated more by the University. Regular communication about how the system contributes to staff development in a school/department was proposed by the focus groups as a means of connecting more with staff and helping to define parameters for workload. With the start of the two year cycle in 2012 again, the opportunity exists to give extra visibility to this University initiative.

### **2.5(c) Further Supports**

Over the past number of years UCC has provided many on-site wellbeing interventions such as health and wellbeing exhibitions, an on-site massage service, lunch-time talks on health and nutritional issues, money management weeks and tax clinics, to name but a few. In the 2012 Staff Wellbeing Survey, UCC invited staff to identify what areas they would like further support, if any. The information was classified into the following four categories:

- a. Personal life;
- b. Work-life;

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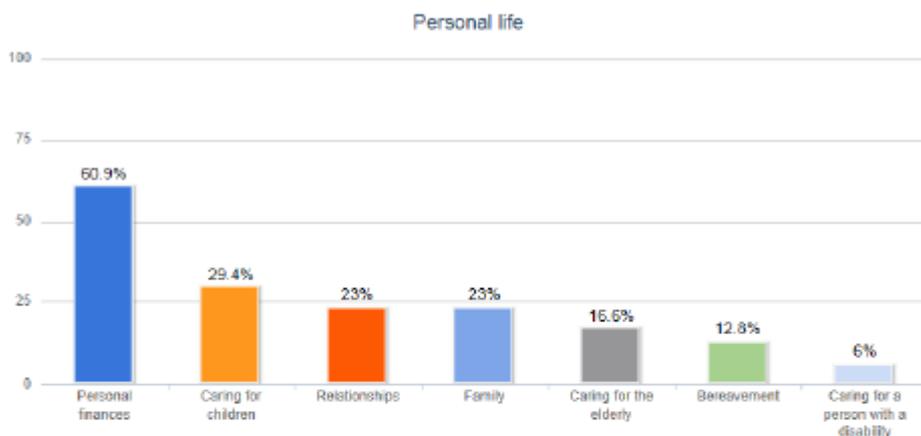
<sup>5</sup> UCC, Staff Performance and Development Review Policy

- c. Health and wellbeing and;
- d. Workplace.

*Personal life*

Over 60% of staff reported that they would like further information/support on personal finances with nearly 30% expressing a need for support on the caring of children. When staff were asked if they were concerned about their personal finances, 60.9% said yes. This percentage equates to 678 staff members out of a total response of 1,114 who answered the question suggesting that an intervention should be an essential element of the response to the survey by UCC.

*Personal Life*



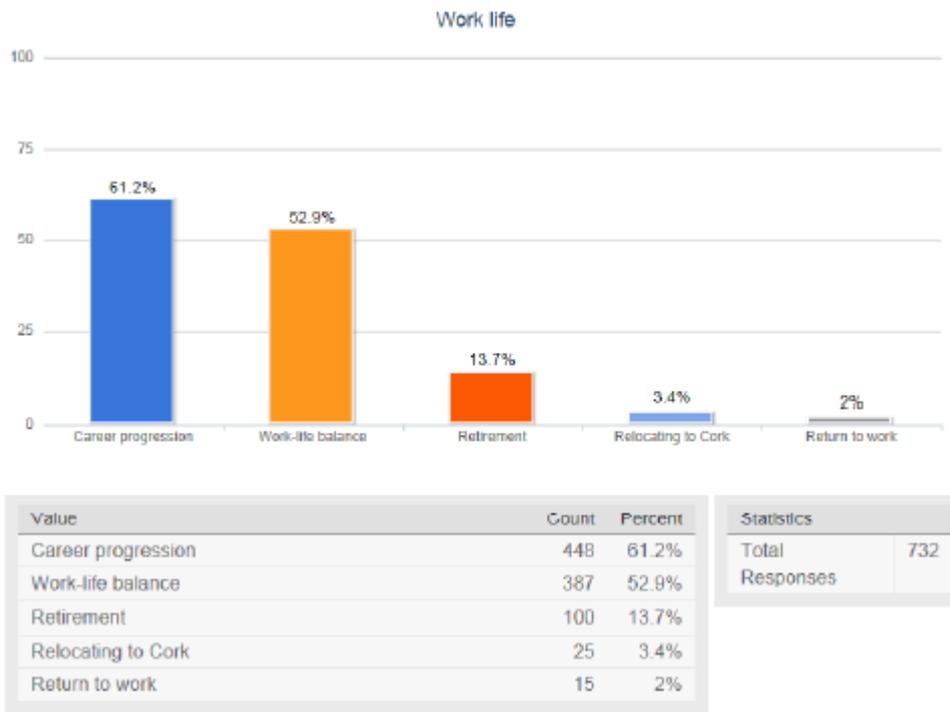
Value	Count	Percent
Personal finances	315	60.9%
Caring for children	152	29.4%
Relationships	119	23%
Family	119	23%
Caring for the elderly	86	16.6%
Bereavement	66	12.8%
Caring for a person with a disability	31	6%

Statistics	
Total Responses	517

*Work-life*

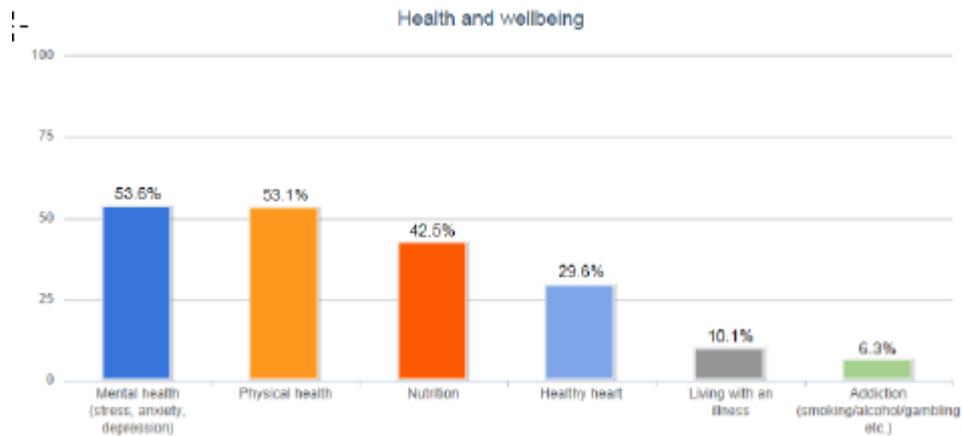
61% identified career progression as a concern and nearly 53% highlighted work-life balance as a difficulty. UCC is mid-way through the delivery of a new career management framework for researchers and is starting to identify a developmental framework for administrative staff in the University. The Staff Enhancement and Professional Development Committee (SDEC) are also beginning to look at how to support professional development of academic, research and possibly other staff categories. In addition the Department of Human Resources is now providing information on training by staff category to enable different staff categories to identify and pursue professional development opportunities.

The University Academic Promotions and Establishment Board have recently released a restricted call for promotions and this policy is being revisited shortly by UMTO. Re-grading for administrative staff is still suspended. It therefore comes as no surprise that career progression has emerged as an anxiety for staff and limitations on resources is what is possibly impacting on work-life balance as staff have to work longer hours due to less support being made available.



*Health and wellbeing*

Mental health (53.6%), physical health (53.1%) and nutrition (42.5%) were the top three health concerns of staff. However, while they were identified as the main areas requiring support, it is encouraging to note that over 90% of the workforce in UCC are non-smokers, 66% would be interested in a six-week fitness programme, three quarters of the workforce eat more than three portions of fruit and vegetables a day and most of the staff reported drinking alcohol in moderation.



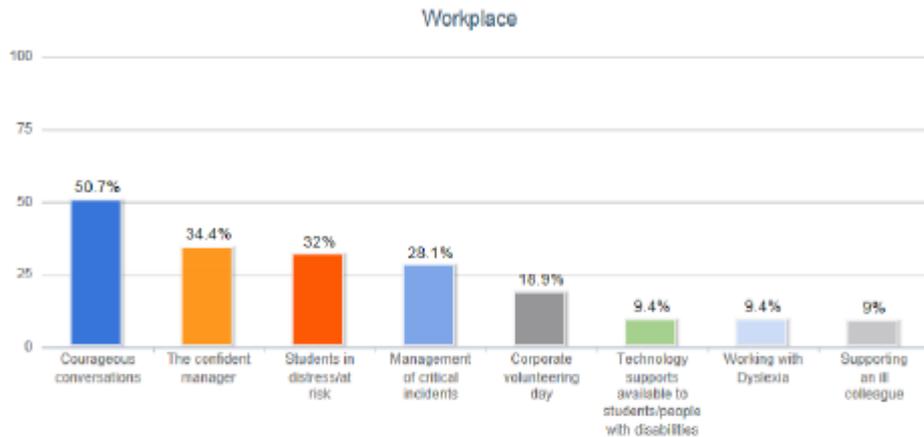
Value	Count	Percent
Mental health (stress, anxiety, depression)	324	53.6%
Physical health	321	53.1%
Nutrition	257	42.5%
Healthy heart	179	29.6%
Living with an illness	61	10.1%
Addiction (smoking/alcohol/gambling etc.)	38	6.3%

Statistics	
Total Responses	604

### Workplace

50.7% expressed that they would like further assistance on having courageous conversations, 34.4% would like support to become a confident manager, 32% would like help with the management of students in distress/at risk and 28.1% asked for support on the management of critical incidents. All of these requirements can be addressed through up-skilling developmental programmes and have been included in the 2012/2013 Staff Training Calendar.



Value	Count	Percent
Courageous conversations	320	50.7%
The confident manager	217	34.4%
Students in distress/at risk	202	32%
Management of critical incidents	177	28.1%
Corporate volunteering day	119	18.9%
Technology supports available to students/people with disabilities	59	9.4%
Working with Dyslexia	59	9.4%
Supporting an ill colleague	57	9%

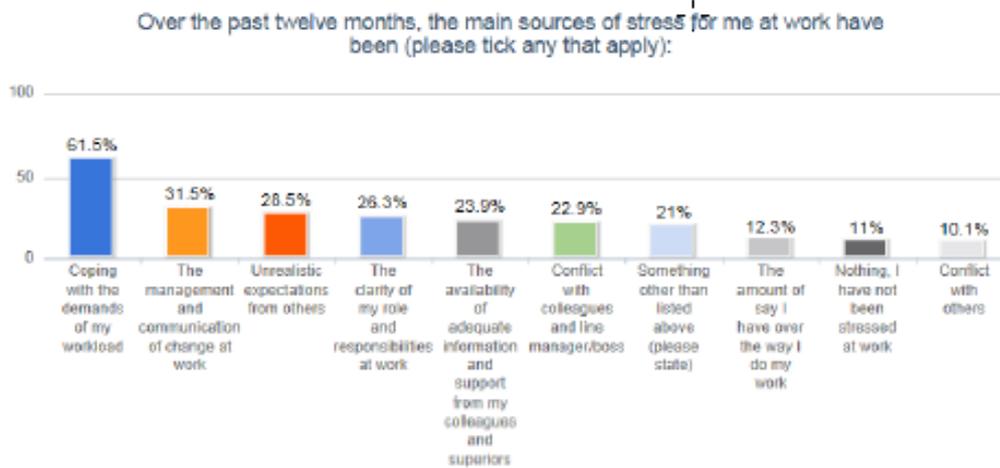
Statistics	
Total Responses	631

### 2.5(d) Lifestyle Behaviours (WHO 5 Wellbeing Index)

The WHO-5 well-being Index was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to measure an individual's psychological wellbeing. The WHO-5 consists of five statements which covers positive mood (good spirits, relaxation), vitality (being active and waking up fresh and rested), and general interests (being interested in things). Overall scores range from 0 to 25. Lower scores signify lower levels of wellbeing with a score below 13 indicating poor wellbeing. See *Appendix C* for an interpretation of the items of the WHO-5 Questionnaire.

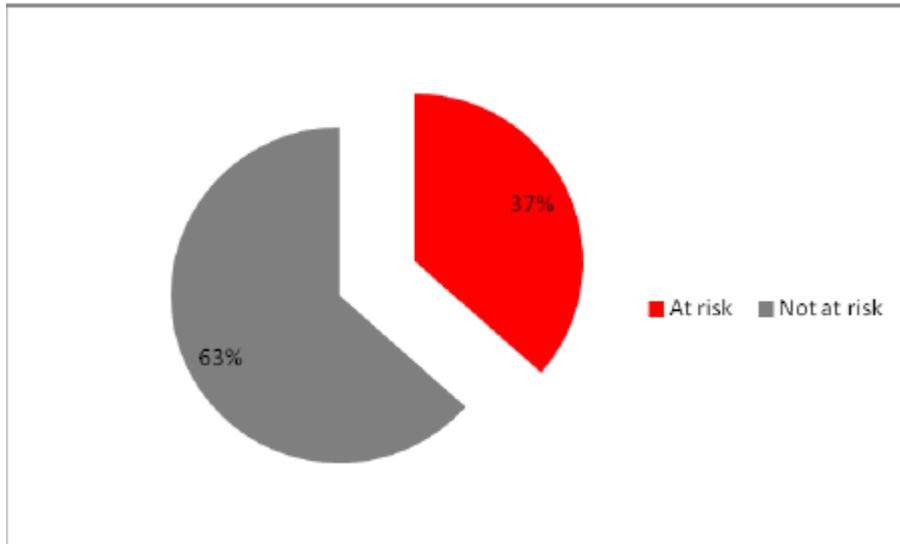
## Main sources of stress in UCC

*Over the past twelve months, the main sources of stress for me at work have been (please tick any that apply):*



Value	Count	Percent	Statistics	
Coping with the demands of my workload	685	61.5%	Total	1,113
The management and communication of change at work	351	31.5%	Responses	
Unrealistic expectations from others	317	28.5%		
The clarity of my role and responsibilities at work	293	26.3%		
The availability of adequate information and support from my colleagues and superiors	266	23.9%		
Conflict with colleagues and line manager/boss	255	22.9%		
Something other than listed above (please state)	234	21%		
The amount of say I have over the way I do my work	137	12.3%		
Nothing, I have not been stressed at work	122	11%		
Conflict with others	112	10.1%		

63% of staff in UCC reported positive wellbeing while 37% were in the poor wellbeing range. Between 25% and 45% is the norm for most companies which suggests that a direct intervention is not needed. However, best practice would encourage the continuation of initiatives to reduce organisational stressors and to bring those with poor wellbeing into a more positive atmosphere.



### SECTION 3 - Conclusion

The UCC Staff Wellbeing Survey 2012 attempted to capture the welfare and wellbeing needs of staff in the University to provide an effectual evidence-based plan. The information provided by staff suggests that the majority of resources need to be aligned to address the areas of management support, relationships and roles.

These causes of workplace stress have also been supported by research conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in Ireland in 2011, *“The top causes of stress at work are workloads, management style, non-work factors such as relationships and family, relationships at work and considerable organisational change/restructuring. Job insecurity is a more common cause of stress in the public sector this year compared with last year and is higher there than in the private or non-profit sectors”*<sup>i</sup>

While the identification of the need is just the first step in the process of developing a properly integrated employee welfare and wellbeing programme, it is hoped that this step was an important affirmation of the commitment of the University to staff welfare as well as an opportunity to engage in discussion to allow UCC to prepare the right blend of programmes and initiatives to enhance positive wellbeing in the University.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Scoring the workplace stressors – management standards

The work stressor questions are scored by computing an average figure for each of the six Management Standards for the workforce. The scores range from 1 to 5. A lower score indicates poor performance or a potential problem area.

Employees' scores are then compared to benchmark scores drawn from 136 organisations (circa, 160,000 employees) that have already completed the survey. The benchmark scores are expressed in percentiles and are colour coded to ease their reading.

The benchmark scores vary from category to category and from question to question. For example, the average response for the control category (say 3.8) may be higher than the average response for the demands category (say 3.2). Therefore, it may be possible to score 3.4 in each category and be above average in one yet below average and potentially “in the red” in the other. The percentile boundaries as well as the averages vary for each Standard. NB, category scores are useful to compare with past results and to benchmark against other companies but cannot be meaningfully compared across different categories. This also applies to individual question results.

Results that fall below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile are coloured red and indicate that the average of employees' scores falls in the bottom 20% of those surveyed in the benchmark data. Results that are below average i.e. below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile but are above the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile are coloured amber. Scores that are above average i.e. higher than the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile but not above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile are colour coded blue. Results that are above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile are coloured green indicating that the average of employees' scores falls in the top 20% of those surveyed in the benchmark data.

In addition to the overall results, the Individual Question Results provide an average score for each question. The colour coding gives an indication of how the score for that question relates to the benchmark. It is the colour coding and the degree to which the results are within each band that should be compared across the various categories and not the actual category score themselves.

Colour Codes	
Green	Good
Blue	Good but could be improved
Amber	Needs improvement
Red	Requires attention

## Appendix B – UCC Responses to the six workplace stressors

The results of the 2012 Staff Wellbeing Survey in UCC to the six identified workplace stressors are captured in the following tables:

Demands: workload, work patterns, and the work environment

	Score
<b>Demands</b>	<b>3.13</b>
Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	3.05
I have unachievable deadlines	3.49
I have to work very intensively	2.19
I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	2.92
I am unable to take sufficient breaks	3.43
I am pressured to work long hours	3.45
I have to work very fast	3.10
I have unrealistic time pressures	3.41

7. Control: How much say the person has in the way they do their work

	Score
<b>Control</b>	<b>3.72</b>
I can decide when to take a break	4.02
I have a say in my own work speed	3.49
I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	3.83
I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	3.26
I have some say over the way I work	4.04
My working time can be flexible	3.69

8. Support: encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

	Score
<b>Manager Support</b>	<b>3.33</b>
I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	2.98
I can rely on my line manager to help me out with my work	3.57
I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	3.45
I am supported through emotionally demanding work	3.28
My line manager encourages me at work	3.39

	Score
<b>Peer Support</b>	<b>3.93</b>
If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	3.82
I can get help and support I need from colleagues	3.90
I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	4.11
My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems	3.89

9. Relationships: promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

	Score
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>3.60</b>
I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words	4.14
There is friction or anger between colleagues	3.22
I am subject to bullying at work	4.35
Relationships at work are strained	2.69

10. Role: Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles

	Score
<b>Role</b>	<b>3.99</b>
I am clear what is expected of me at work	4.12
I know how to go about getting my job done	4.34
I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	4.07
I am clear about the goals and objectives for my Department	3.71
I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	3.71

11. Change: How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

	Score
<b>Change</b>	<b>2.98</b>
I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	3.11
Staff are consulted about change at work	2.84
When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	3.00

## Appendix C – Interpretation of the items of the WHO-5 Questionnaire

### *Rating*

Each of the five items is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 (= not present) to 5 (= constantly present). The theoretical raw score ranges from 0 to 25 and is transformed into a scale from 0 (worst thinkable well-being) to 100 (best thinkable well-being). Thus, higher scores mean better well-being.

### *Interpretation*

The raw score is obtained by adding the figures in the boxes. The score range is from 0 to 25. It is recommended to administer the Major Depression (ICD-10) Inventory if the raw score is below 13 or if the patient has answered 0 to 1 to any of the five items. A score below 13 indicates poor well-being and is an indication for testing for depression under ICD-10.

### *Monitoring change*

In order to monitor possible changes in well-being, the percentage score is used. The percentage value is obtained by multiplying the score by 4. A ten percent difference indicates a significant change.

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<sup>i</sup> CIPD, Absence Management, Annual Survey Report 2011, p6