

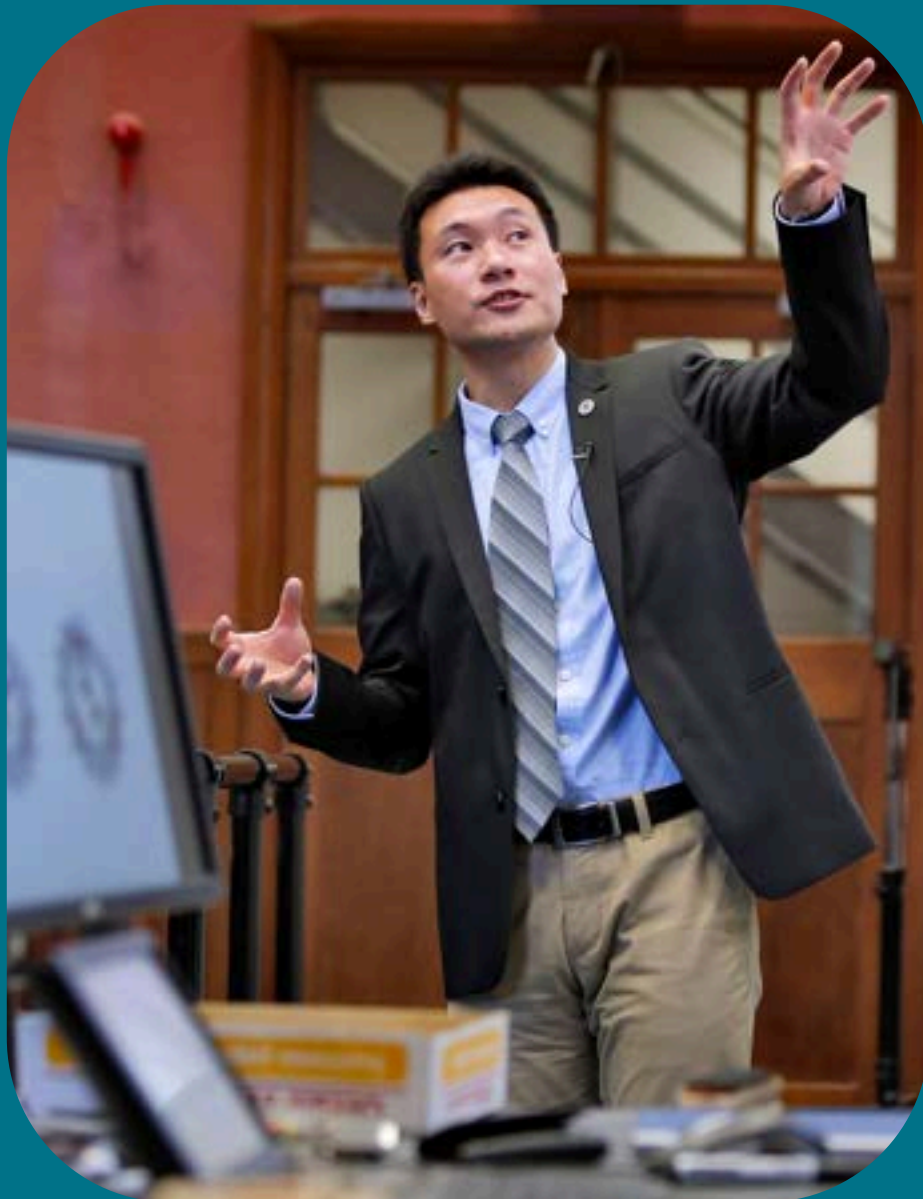
University Wellness Action Plan

Guide and Template



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If you require this document in an alternative format please
email: staffwellbeing@ed.ac.uk or phone: 0131 651 4773



Helpful definitions

In this guide when we refer to ‘mental health’ we are using the term in the broadest sense.

You’ll find some definitions to terms used in this guide, in the next section.



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Mental health

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to more severe mental health conditions.

Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, to work productively, interact positively with others, and realise our own potential. When we talk about wellbeing we are referring to mental wellbeing.

Mental ill health

Mental ill health is when we can find ourselves struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety. This might mean we're also coping with feeling restless, confused, short tempered, upset or preoccupied. We all go through periods of experiencing mental ill health – mental health is a spectrum of moods and experiences, and we all have times when we feel better or worse.

Mental health conditions

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health. A mental health condition is when difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing a prolonged period of poor mental health.

Common mental health conditions

These can include; depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of conditions that can lead to one in four people experiencing mental ill health in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild, to very severe.

Severe mental health conditions

These can have very varied symptoms, affect everyday life to different degrees and may require more complex and/or long-term treatments. These can include conditions such as; schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Work-related stress

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the adverse reaction people can have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them at work.

Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. It is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Whilst stress is not a specific medical diagnosis, if stressors become too excessive or prolonged, mental (and physical) ill-health may develop.

Burnout

Burnout is a term used to describe a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. In addition, you may experience poor motivation and productivity in your work, and feel irritable or anxious. It can occur when you are exposed to long-term stress and feel under constant pressure.



What is A Wellness Action Plan?

It's a proactive way to manage our
mental health and wellbeing at
work.



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What is a Wellness Action Plan?

A University Wellness Action Plan (UWAP) is a personalised, practical resource that everyone can benefit from completing — whether you have a mental health condition or not.

A University Wellness Action Plan can help you to reflect on:

- What keeps you well at work
- What might trigger stress or poor wellbeing
- The steps you and your manager can take to support your mental health at work

A University Wellness Action Plan can help open up a meaningful conversation between you and a manager, or your peers and colleagues, giving them a better understanding of your needs and experiences.

This shared understanding can lead to stronger support, improved wellbeing, and greater satisfaction and performance at work.

Just as we all have physical health, we all have mental health. A University Wellness Action Plan is designed to help everyone proactively manage their mental wellbeing, wherever they are on their journey.

UWAP's are especially valuable when returning to work after a period of absence. They can provide a helpful structure for discussing the support or workplace adjustments you may need, ensuring a smoother and supportive transition back into your role.



A note on who to talk to

This guide refers to the direct line manager as the person you could choose to share your Wellness Action Plan with. However, this may not always be appropriate. You can choose who you feel most comfortable speaking to. This may include your manager, and could also include another trusted manager, Human Resources, Occupational Health, a union representative, or your GP.



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How to use A University Wellness Action Plan

How to get started

Schedule in some time to fill in your Wellness Action Plan. You may prefer to complete this in a private space where you have enough time, or you can start it and return to finish the form in stages.

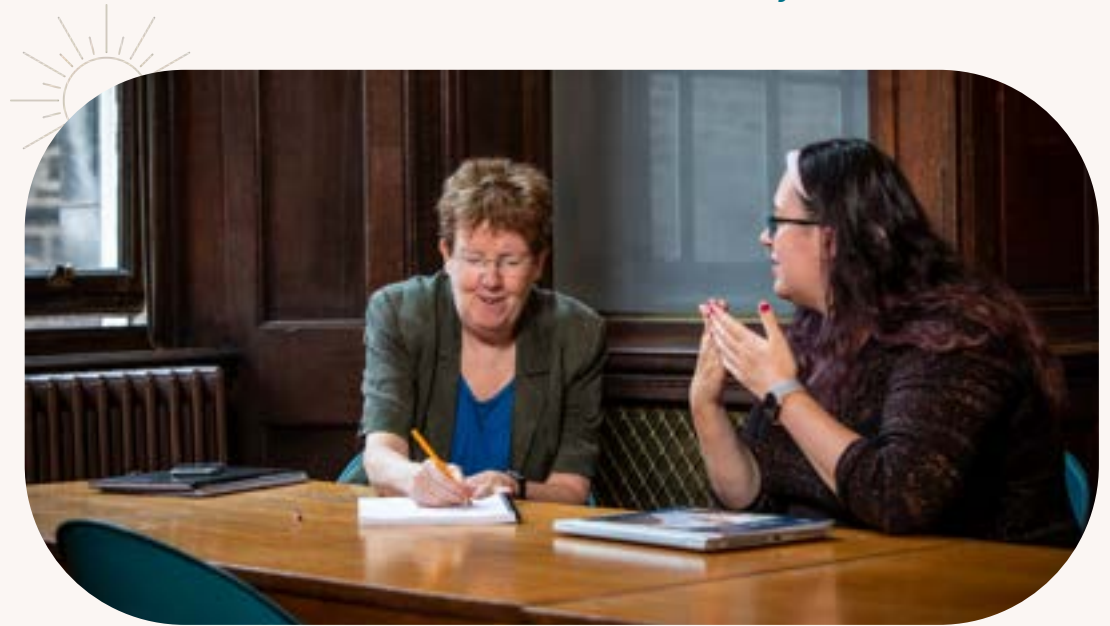
Consider the current pressures you're facing, the impact they're having on your mental health and wellbeing and what you could put in place to deal with these.

Working alongside colleagues in person can support social connection and collaboration, while also bringing its own challenges. You may wish to consider how your working environment affects your ability to carry out certain tasks, manage responsibilities outside of work, maintain concentration, and communicate effectively with colleagues across teams or departments, particularly those based in other locations.

It may be helpful to consider what support you and your manager could explore and put in place to assist you. You may wish to discuss these with those in your household too, if you are working from home.

Once you've completed your Wellness Action Plan, it's helpful to review it regularly, for example, every 3-6 months. This can help you to notice any learning, helpful practices, or things you may wish to change.

It is also beneficial to understand your triggers and ensure you are adapting effectively to any changes in your working arrangements. As circumstances can change over time, it is important to identify what helps you stay well and regularly review whether the support and strategies you have put in place are continuing to work effectively.



Ways of working

Sharing your Wellness Action Plan can be a useful self-reflective tool.

If you think it would be helpful, you can share your completed Wellness Action Plan with your manager to support conversations about your wellbeing. By doing this, your manager can help identify when you may be becoming unwell and/or support you in putting measures in place to help you stay well.

You could also consider sharing it with colleague(s) to promote openness and understanding, enabling you to work effectively together and provide mutual support.

A note on confidentiality

You own your Wellness Action Plan. The information is intended to be read and shared only with your consent.

You can decide whether to keep your Wellness Action Plan confidential between you and your manager (or another appropriate person), or whether to share it more widely. For example, you may choose to share it with colleagues to help them better understand what supports your wellbeing at work.



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Tips for
staying
well at
work

Tips for staying well at work

Identifying your triggers

We all have unique experiences. What may impact one person's mental well-being might not have the same effect on you. Whether it's work-related challenges or current circumstances, we all encounter moments of stress, sadness, or difficulty in coping.

Understanding what triggers mental health issues for you, can help you to anticipate potential problems and find effective solutions. This could include; consuming too much negative news, or facing an overwhelming workload. Identifying your triggers is a crucial step towards better mental health.

Make time for yourself

Taking time for yourself is essential for your overall wellbeing and helps you stay balanced and better able to cope with challenges. It's important to prioritise your own needs: neglecting them can lead to stress or burnout.

Remember to take short breaks throughout the day, as well as allocating at least half an hour for a meal. A brief pause can help you feel rejuvenated, and provide a fresh perspective on any work-related challenges you may face.

Be kind to yourself

Remember it's okay to not be okay. We may feel different from one day to the next as situations change, so it's important to be kind to yourself.

Connect with colleagues

Evidence suggests that feeling close to and valued by other people is a basic human need. Good relationships are important to our wellbeing.

You may wish to explore the social opportunities and networks that are available through the University, e.g. The Disabled Staff Network, Edinburgh Race Equality Network. Joining a lunch time walking group or striking up a conversation with a colleague over coffee in the break room can be great way to build professional relationships.

Mark every milestone

We all want to contribute and make a difference to the things we work on, we want to feel accomplished and that we've achieved something. It's important to celebrate all milestones, not just successes. Some days that might mean a great piece of work, other days it could be making the bed. Try to identify one thing each day that you can accomplish.

How to access wellbeing support

There are lots of ways to access wellbeing support at the University;

- [The Staff Health and Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Occupational Health Service](#)
- [Staff Disability Advice Service](#)
- [Counselling and wellbeing services](#) available through the Employee Assistance Programme
- [The Chaplaincy Listening Service](#)
- [Edinburgh Sport - Active Lives](#)
- [Human Resources](#)

Quick tip: Getting the basics right

Quality sleep, a good diet and proper hydration can make all the difference to your work day. Be sure to keep yourself well hydrated throughout the day and try to get enough sleep.

Ask for help

If you're worried about workload, take the opportunity to discuss this with your manager. Identify approaches, strategies and tools to help manage your workload. Explore if additional training and development will help support. Discuss what you can prioritise, and reflect on what is possible to negotiate in terms of timelines and deadlines, as well as the scope or scale of the work to be completed.

If you're encountering a bottleneck related to other teams, departments or staff, discuss what support your manager might be able to provide in addressing some of these issues.

Quick tip: Setting boundaries

It can be easy to bring work home, especially if you've had the experience of working remotely. Consider how you communicate boundaries with colleagues, through making clear your working hours using your diary or email signature, and think about how you manage work notifications to digital devices outside of working hours.

University Wellness Action Plan Template

A University Wellness Action Plan can help us focus on what we need to do to stay well at work, whether working on campus or remotely. It details what we can do to look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

It also helps us to develop an awareness of our working style, any stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these with managers and colleagues.



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1. How you work

What are your current working arrangements?

You might wish to highlight any flexible working arrangements you've agreed with your manager, for example, your working pattern.

Are there any characteristics of your individual working style that you'd like to discuss with your manager?

For example;

- When being allocated work, include a discussion about deadlines.
- Enough time to prepare prior to meetings or creative tasks.
- Access to a mentor for questions you might not want to contact your manager about.
- A written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly.
- Clear quality criteria for work outputs if you have a tendency to over-work a task.
- Particular times in the day when you have more energy and the best focus.

2. Staying mentally healthy at work

What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

For example; taking an adequate lunch break away from your workspace, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, if possible - natural light at your workspace, opportunities to get to know colleagues, in person or remotely.

Are there situations or behaviours that can trigger mental ill health for you whilst working?

For example; conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan or difficulties in contacting colleagues.

What can you, your manager or colleagues put in place to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work and minimise these triggers?

For example; where and how meetings are set up, regular feedback and one-to-ones, flexible working options and keeping up to date with wider University developments.

3. Experiencing mental ill health at work

How might experiencing mental ill health impact on your work?

For example; you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, experience difficulty concentrating, or get headaches.

Are there any early warning signs that your manager or colleagues might notice when you start to experience mental ill health?

4. Experiencing mental ill health at work continued.

What actions would you like to be taken if any of these early warning signs are noticed by your manager?

For example; suggest a break away from your usual work place, talk to you discreetly about it, or contact someone that you have agreed can be contacted.

Is there anything else you would like to share that you think would help to support your mental health and wellbeing at work?

Signatures and Agreed Follow Up Actions

Employee signature:

Date:

Line manager signature:

Date:

Review date:

Additional Comments and Notes



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