



## **POLICY ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS**

<b>Policy Owner</b>	Chief Operating Officer
<b>Division/Unit/Department</b>	Human Capital Management Division
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## 1. DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

- 1.1 **Consultation-** process of interaction whereby a person or group seeks to verify, clarify, confirm or gather information, seek advice or an opinion from another person or group.
- 1.2 **Employer-**the University of Johannesburg (UJ)
- 1.3 **Counselling-**the therapeutic or advisory intervention (telephonically and/or face-to-face) by a UJ Wellness Consultant or contracted Service Provider.
- 1.4 **Critical incident-**a critical incident is a “traumatic event, or the threat of such which causes extreme stress, fear or injury”. Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to serious injury, illness, or death of a family member, student or colleague, missing family member or student, carjacking episode, robbery and/or physical assault, severe verbal or psychological aggression, witnessing a serious accident or incidence of violence, natural disaster e.g. earthquake, flood, windstorm, hailstorm, or extremes of temperature, fire, bomb threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard and social issues such as sexual assault, drug abuse, Alcohol abuse
- 1.5 **Employee Wellness Programme (EWP)-:** An integrated health and wellness programme that focusses on the overall health and wellbeing of employees. This includes emotional and physical issues to improve the employee’s functioning at work.
- 1.6 **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)-:** A workplace programme which is designed to assist in the identification and resolution of an employee’s problems, which may adversely affect his/her job performance. The EAP also focusses on preventative and proactive interventions for early detection and identification of problems.
- 1.7 **Dependent(s)-**the immediate family (spouse, son, daughter and/or family member living under the same roof as employee) who may be included for access to some of the EWP (such as Counselling) at the sole discretion of the employer with the clear understanding that such services may be terminated by the employer at any stage.
- Dependents also include common law husband and wife, polygamous couples, same sex couples, foster children, stepchildren as well as

children who are not living with the employee, but are financially dependent on the employee.

1.8 **Employee**-a person legally employed by UJ, whether part-time, full-time, fixed-term such as on a time-limited contract basis.

1.9 **Intervention**-the action or process initiated (this can also be initiated by a line manager or the Employee) by a Wellness Consultant or Service Provider to address a situation or prevent a situation from occurring.

1.10 **Service Provider**-a service provider offering employee wellness-related services such as psychological counselling services to employees and their dependents.

1.11 **Wellness Practitioner**-a professionally trained or skilled person in health care, legal issues, social work, psychology, employee assistance programmes, human resources or any related humanities or medical fields, appointed as an Employee or Service Provider to maintain and promote the wellness of employees and/or dependents at UJ.

## 2. PREAMBLE

2.1 The UJ strives to provide and maintain the best possible higher education. Within this context the health and wellness of the UJ employees are of paramount importance in achieving these ideals. The UJ acknowledges the Bill of Rights enshrined within the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1966: "Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellness" as well as other relevant legislation pertaining to the rights and well-being of employees. Therefore, every effort shall be made to involve employees on all levels of employment as well as organised labour in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the EWP. The UJ shall strive to create a safe and supportive workplace by paying due consideration and balancing the specific needs of the employees and that of the institution. The EWP services are aimed at maintaining a high level of physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, career, financial, environmental and social well-being of employees and

to achieving a healthy and productive workforce.

### **3. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy defines enabling mechanisms to promote employee wellness to the UJ employees in maintaining a high level of physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, career, financial and social well-being.

### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

- 4.1 To promote an effective and caring environment in which employees can operate.
- 4.2 To prevent healthy employees from becoming ill and manage illnesses, particularly those that are related to lifestyle, work overload, trauma, violence and psychological factors, by reducing stress and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- 4.3 To address all individual, organizational and environmental factors that may influence the health and wellness of employees.
- 4.4 To manage interdependencies in the EWP at the UJ.
- 4.4 Ensure the effective implementation of the HIV & AIDS workplace programme of UJ.

### **5. SCOPE OF POLICY**

- 5.1 This policy applies to all the UJ employees as well as dependents as defined of such employees of the UJ.

### **6. PRINCIPLES**

- 6.1 The management of the UJ believes that the success of the EWP depends on the implementation and maintaining of the following principles:

#### **6.1.1 Confidentiality**

- 6.1.1.1 Participation in the EWP shall be treated as confidential. The EWP shall recognise the employee's right to privacy, in accordance with the South African Constitution, sec 14(d) where the right to privacy is enshrined.
- 6.1.1.2 Should an employee be referred to EWP by his or line manager, s/he

does not have a right to know what the problem is, or which psycho-social support service the employee is attending. No information will be released to the line manager or others without the written consent of the employee or a legal requirement to do so. If the referral emanates from the line manager feedback will be provided only on progress and not on diagnosis.

6.1.1.3 EWP records and documents will be kept separate from personnel and medical records. All record keeping will observe the normal conventions with regards to confidentiality. The only records available to departments will be anonymous data collected for statistical use and will be aggregate in nature to protect the identity of the employee.

6.1.1.4 Any breach of confidentiality shall constitute misconduct and shall be dealt with in terms of the disciplinary code and procedures applicable to any misconduct.

6.1.1.5 However, there are limitations to confidentiality, namely:

- (a) If an employee is suicidal or is perceived to be a danger to him/herself or others;
- (b) Where there is child abuse;
- (c) Where the employee threatens to damage property;
- (d) Fraud, corruption or commission of a crime; and/or
- (e) Subpoena by the court of law.

## **6.1.2 Accessibility**

6.1.2.1 The programme is available to all employees of the UJ and their dependants, as defined in the policy. The services can be accessed at no cost to employees, in the following ways:

- a) Direct contact with internal UJ employee Wellness Practitioners.
- b) Direct contact with the external service provider who is accessible 24/7/365 days.

### **6.1.3 Voluntarism**

6.1.3.1 Participation in EWP is voluntary, even if referred by management. No employee shall be forced to participate in the programme. The decision to seek or accept assistance through the EWP rests mainly with the employee.

### **6.1.4 Neutrality**

6.1.4.1 The neutrality of the EWP shall be respected and as such shall not come between management and employee organisations.

### **6.1.5 Equality, dignity and respect**

6.1.5.1 All employees using EWP services shall be treated equally with dignity and respect, and shall receive the same consideration as employees with health problems, including sick leave benefits

### **6.1.6 Transparency**

6.1.6.1 The interventions and services of the EWP will be conducted in an open and transparent manner, without compromising the principle of confidentiality.

### **6.1.7 Job security**

6.1.7.1 Participation in the EWP shall not threaten an employee's job security or chances of promotion, because such decisions are made purely on the grounds of work performance.

## **7. POSITIONING OF EWP**

7.1 The EWP is positioned in the Human Capital Management Division (HCM), reporting directly to the Director: Employment Relations and Wellness. The Executive Director: HCM shall champion and monitor the EWP, ensure compliance with the university regulations and relevant legislation, report the EWP activities to the UJ management.

## **8. LEVELS OF INTERVENTION**

### **8.1 Individual/personal level**

8.1.1 This is a reactive counselling service in response to a particular programme. Referral may be voluntary or formal, and the service is confidential.

## **8.2 Group/interpersonal level**

8.2.1 The focus is more project-based and addresses the needs of a particular group of employees. This ensures that the programmes adopt a proactive stance and prevent problems or assist individuals experiencing identified problems e.g. stress, HIV and AIDS, financial difficulties, etc. the interventions are not one on one, but educative in nature.

## **8.3 Organisational level**

8.3.1 The wellness programme supports the institution by identifying the psychosocial risks and trends that impact the Departments and Faculties<sup>1</sup> and providing the necessary interventions. The programme also assist managers with tools that will help them to proactively identify employees at risk and refer them to the programme.

## **9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

9.1 Marketing of EWP programmes will be monitored by the uptake and evaluated by the number of employees reached.

9.2 The services will be evaluated by the users (employees) by completing feedback questionnaires after receiving a service. This can also be conducted telephonically.

9.3 Monthly, quarterly and annual reports will be used as a tool to evaluate the service.

9.4 Peer review is another tool to be used for monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

9.5 The programme will also be evaluated by monitoring the service level agreements with the wellness service provider.

## **10. REFERRAL PROCEDURES**

Individuals may obtain professional assistance through the EWP in one of the following ways:

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to 'faculty' includes the College of Business and Economics (CBE), and the Johannesburg Business School (JBS).



## **10.1 Self-Referral**

10.1.1 An employee who would like confidential assistance for a personal or work related problem should call the wellness service provider and ask to speak to a EWP Representative. The EWP Representative will either provide the necessary assistance on the telephone or will arrange for further confidential consultation at a counsellor's offices in the employee's work area or community.

## **10.2 Informal Managerial Referral**

10.2.1 If a manager is in doubt about the appropriateness of making a EWP referral, the manager should contact the Executive consultant/ Manager Care Centre; his/her own manager, or HCM (EWP) for confirmation. The following are among the circumstances in which a manager should make an informal referral to the EWP:

- a) A request by an employee for assistance with a personal problem;
- b) A particular on the job incident or observation by the manager which indicates the possible presence of a personal problem, excluding incidents

10.2.2 Whether or not the employee chooses to utilize the EWP at that time, the manager should reinforce UJ's expectation for improved performance and the consequences of failure to improve. The manager should also point out that the EWP will be available should the employee wish to use it in the future.

## **10.3 Formal Managerial Referral**

10.3.1 Formal referrals may occur as a result of:

- a) An employee request to a manager for help
- b) A decline in productivity and work performance
- c) The result of a problem serious enough to warrant disciplinary action up to and including termination

10.3.2 Under circumstances that require a formal referral, the employee's manager should contact the wellness service provider to discuss the situation with a managerial consultant. The managerial consultant will be able to advise the manager on how to approach the employee and ensure

an appropriate referral.

## **11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **11.1 The Manager/Supervisor**

11.1.1 Managers/Supervisors should always be alert and observe the performance of their employees so as to identify any change in behavior and/ or decline in performance and refer the employee concerned on time, where appropriate.

11.1.1.2 Managers are not expected to attempt to diagnose personal problems of the employee or offer a personal opinion. Instead managers are required to refer the employee to the appropriate resources such as the EWP.

11.1.3 Managers may not request the employee to divulge the nature of the problem when requesting leave or time off for an appointment with the EWP. If necessary, the employee can provide verification of attendance through the EWP.

11.1.4 Managers are required to maintain a strict level of confidentiality with all cases.

### **11.2 The Employee**

11.2.1 It is the responsibility of the employee to maintain satisfactory job performance. In the event that personal problems cause deterioration of work performance, the employee has a responsibility to obtain the necessary help to bring job performance up to an acceptable level. The EWP is a means to obtain this help.

11.2.2 Employees are assured that personal information concerning employee participation in the EWP is managed in a confidential manner. No information related to an employee's participation in the programme is entered into the individual's personnel file.

### **11.3 The EWP Unit/Coordinator/Manager**

11.3.1 Assist the EWP Service Provider in the positioning of the programme within the Institution in order to optimize its benefit.

11.3.2 Develop action plans for the implementation and acceptance of the programme throughout the Institution.

- 11.3.3 Ensure continued promotion and awareness of the EWP within the Institution and all its divisions – in close collaboration with the EWP Service Provider.
- 11.3.4 In collaboration with EWP Service Provider, interpret EWP utilization statistics and design and implement appropriate and proactive intervention action plans.
- 11.3.5 Coordinate training of supervisors and managers in the identification, management and referral of vulnerable employees.

## **12. POLICY REVIEW**

- 12.1 Regular review of the Policy is conducted in accordance with the approved University Policy on Policy Development. The process takes place in consultation with the relevant quality assurance structures at Faculty and Departmental levels, as well as by the Wellness Committee, under the auspices of the official custodian of this policy namely the Executive Director: HCM.

## **13. POLICY DISCLAIMERS**

- 13.1 The use of EWP does not negate the employee or his/her line manager's responsibility for adhering to policies and procedures. The EWP policy does not replace the disciplinary and/or grievance procedures. Should an employee's personal or work-related problems affect productivity, and an employee is subjected to disciplinary hearing, such processes will run concurrently, affording an employee an opportunity to seek help through the EWP, while the disciplinary hearing is also underway. It is expected that an employee will make every effort to successfully complete counselling within a reasonable time period.

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Aligned to ELG Organogram dated 02 December 2019

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