

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH POLICY

Purpose and Context

This policy refers to current health and safety legislation, university policies, professional guidelines and departmental protocols.

The specialist field of occupational health covers:

- (i) Health related to work; and
- (ii) Work and its impact on health.

Scope

The purpose of the university's occupational health service is to provide a professional, effective and efficient resource which is proactive in the promotion of the physical and mental well-being of staff and students in relation to their work or studies.

The occupational health team will assist in the identification, development, implementation, monitoring and review of strategies for the delivery of occupational health services across the university.

It is not a replacement or substitute for the services provided by general practitioners or other specialists and any treatments or prescription requirements remain their responsibility, not that of the occupational health service.

The occupational health team provides objective advice to employers, workers and students.

1 Introduction

The main duties of the occupational health team are: -

- (a) Setting, implementing and reviewing SMART service standards and departmental procedures which relate to a demonstrated evidence base.
- (b) Undertake pre-employment and pre-training assessment of individuals' health in relation to the requirements of the post or course of study applied for. ([refer to appendix 1](#)).
- (c) Dealing with manager, tutor or self-referrals to the occupational health team ([refer to appendix 2](#)).
- (d) Collaboration to identify and reduce the causes of occupational ill health – this can include liaison and information exchange with external services, general practices or specialists.
- (e) Interpreting information obtained from external sources into tangible advice regarding fitness for work or courses of study.

- (f) Undertaking relevant risk-based health surveillance programmes in accordance with the COSHH Regulations, and health promotion relating to risks such as noise, respiratory and skin sensitisers, and biological agents.
- (g) Providing advice and information regarding the control of work-related risks ([refer to appendix 2](#)).
- (h) Recommending the use of the University's Wellbeing support platform and counselling services where necessary as assessed. ([refer to appendix 2](#)).
- (i) Offering guidance on adjustments to assist with work under the remit of the Equality Act 2010.
- (j) Giving advice regarding sickness absence, rehabilitation to work, redeployment and, where appropriate, and retirement on ill health grounds.
- (k) Undertaking vaccinations and / or blood tests relevant to occupational risks and follow up of body fluid contamination incidents, including sharps injuries ([refer to appendix 3](#)).
- (l) Coordinating and supporting the role of Mental Health First Aiders.

2 Confidentiality, record keeping and expressing concerns

- (a) The occupational health team works within strict guidelines relating to ethics and confidentiality set out by professional bodies and in accordance with GDPR and Data protection Act 2018.
- (b) The records system is designed so that the confidential aspects of clinical information are only accessible to authorised staff within the service.
- (c) Clinical information will not normally be released to anyone without the written consent of the individual concerned ([refer to appendix 2](#)).
- (d) Past or current clients wishing to access their records or make an expression of concern should follow university guidelines.

3 Occupational health staff

- (a) The department is supported by the Occupational Health Administration Team (OHAT) who will normally be the first point of contact.
- (b) The Occupational Health Clinical Lead (OHCL) takes the lead on development and delivery of core occupational health services to both the university and to certain student groups. The OHCL reports to the Director of Human Resources Group.
- (c) The Occupational Health Nursing Advisers (OHNAs), with reference to the OH Clinical Lead, undertake core occupational health activities.
- (d) Where holding the relevant qualification, The OHCL and OHNAs can act as practice teachers to qualified nurses undertaking specialist qualifications in occupational health – clients of the department may be assessed or reviewed by a student under the supervision of either of these.
- (e) The occupational health team has the facility to refer staff or students to a physician qualified in occupational medicine where a specialist opinion is required to support the advice being provided (e.g., ill health retirement, suitability to commence or resume a course of study following a significant ill health issue).

Appendix 1: pre-employment and pre-training health assessment

Pre-employment health screening is carried out for all successful candidates as part of issuing offers of employment. Pre-training health assessments are carried out for all students prior to offer of a place on the course.

HR will issue health declaration forms as part of contractual documentation when offering a post to an individual. The individual must complete the form in full with any supplementary information as requested and return it directly via email to OH for assessment. The individual is not expected to discuss the contents with anyone else

The School of Human and Health Science (HHS) and School of Education and Professional Development (SEPD) admissions teams will issue health declaration forms as part of the requirements of the conditional offer to the individual. The individual must complete the form in full and provide any supplementary information as requested and return directly to OH for assessment. The individual is not expected to discuss the contents with anyone else.

Based on the information declared, the individual may be offered a telephone, Teams or face to face assessment with an OHNA or OH Physician to determine whether any health condition, disability or other issue highlighted may impact on their ability to undertake the role or course applied for. If any adjustments or additional support is recommended, this may be provided in writing to management or the course leader, with the individual's consent.

Where there is a need to undergo health surveillance, blood tests or vaccinations relevant to the individual's work or training course the individual's manager or course leader will be informed to ensure these measures are implemented when the individual starts work or course of study.

Appendix 2: Provision of advice & referrals to occupational health Referrals by managers and academic staff

Written referrals should be made where there is a concern regarding health in relation to work or work's impact on health. The relevant paperwork is available from the Human Resources Department, or in the case of student referrals from the course tutors.

Referrals will be reviewed by members of the OHNA team holding a SCPHN-OH qualification. The OHNA will respond to the questions asked within the referral documentation and provide any other relevant health related summary information as clinically assessed. This will be provided to the individual in the first instance to get consent prior to sending to HR and course leaders as appropriate. The purpose of seeking individual consent is to ensure the individual is content with the summary of discussion and established facts as described. It is not to question clinical assessment or opinion. Where an individual disagrees with any clinical assessment this will be recorded as part of the process but will not prevent a written response from OH.

Dignity at work

Staff who have concerns regarding harassment or bullying at work should refer to and follow the university's Dignity at work good practice guide and procedures [Dignity at Work Advisors - University of Huddersfield](#)

Counselling provisions

Where it is assessed as appropriate as part of a management referral, employees experiencing personal or work-based problems may be offered access to confidential counselling services. Students will be referred to the Students Wellbeing and Disability department.

Self-referrals

Staff concerned that their work may be affecting their health or health affecting their work and who are not able to liaise with their manager, can refer to members of the occupational health team by email or telephone and will be given the opportunity to discuss appropriate options. It is not possible to operate a drop-in service for self-referrals.

The OHAT will be able to take simple information from enquirers to check whether occupational health is the most appropriate route to deal with the problem. This is aimed to avoid any delays in treatment that should be sourced from general practitioners.

Where a member of staff or a student self-refers, OH will not provide a report for either management, HR or course leader. OH, may however advise that the individual liaises with HR, management or course leader regarding the possibility of a management or course leader referral if it is deemed necessary. If, as the result of a self-referral, it is identified that there is a significant risk to the health of themselves or others, the occupational health team is under an obligation to make the university's management or course leader aware of this and the individual will be informed of this decision.

Advice on work-related health matters

Staff and managers can ask the department for advice regarding work related ill health and following any injuries sustained in the course of work, health surveillance issues or work-related travel health.

Health promotion

The occupational health team will provide ad-hoc health promotion and education to individuals as well as work together with the Wellbeing Team to deliver initiatives and strategies relating to staff and student health and wellbeing.

Appendix 3: vaccinations, blood tests and body fluid contamination incidents

Students undertaking health studies courses and certain other staff of the university will be recommended to undergo vaccination relevant to the work-based health risks that they may encounter. These are based on current Department of Health guidance and local risk assessment. University staff who may come into contact with body fluids or sharps (may include used needles) in the course of their work should make themselves familiar with their departmental guidelines.

Advice regarding what constitutes a contamination incident will be provided by the occupational health team based on their risk assessment. Any individual in doubt should speak to their line manager or course leader about any particular hazards they think they may need protection from in the course of their work.

Body fluid contamination incidents (including sharps injuries) should always be discussed with the department as a matter of urgency (i.e. as soon as the incident occurs).

Where students are on a clinical placement either on or away from university campus they should make themselves familiar with local policy at the start of their placement and follow this in the event of any incident then advising it to the University occupational health department after initial action has taken place.

POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS	
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Compliance Checks:	OH, Clinical Lead to regularly review.
Related Policies/Procedures:	Dignity at Work - Good Practice Guide and Procedure on Dealing with Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace.

REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
V1.2	April 2022	Minor updates to better reflect current practice and changes to staff wellbeing.	OH Clinical Lead and Director of HR
V1.0	Sept 2019	Major redraft under new Policy Framework – removed from H&SPolicy, now standalone policy (approval required)	Head of Occupational Health