

Menopause Policy

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1 Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 There are three recognised stages of menopause: perimenopause, menopause and post-menopause - see [Definitions](#). In this policy the term menopause is used interchangeably to refer to all three stages.
- 1.2 Menopause is a part of life that will be experienced by half of the working population at some point in their working lives. Its impact will be unique to the individual. For some, the impact may be minimal but, for others, the impact can be significant. For others, they may not even be aware that what they are experiencing is linked to the menopause. It is for this reason that there can be confusion and misunderstanding about menopause, as well as embarrassment when discussing it.
- 1.3 The university is committed to creating an open, inclusive and supportive culture where employees understand what menopause is and its potential impact at work. The university wants all employees to feel able and comfortable to speak about menopause-related symptoms and be able to ask for support in managing menopause-related symptoms and their potential impact whilst at work.
- 1.4 This policy aims to provide useful information and guidance on menopause to raise awareness of menopause and its impact amongst employees, enabling an inclusive approach to supporting all individuals experiencing menopause-related symptoms (see [Appendix B](#), 'Intersecting characteristics and menopause'), as well as enabling a consistent understanding of menopause and dispelling myths and common misconceptions.
- 1.5 It also aims to ensure a fair and consistent approach to supporting employees experiencing menopause-related symptoms at work, including explaining and outlining the support that is available from the university and externally.
- 1.6 The policy is intended to help support a reduction in absenteeism across the university, whilst positively supporting the recruitment and retention of employees, and supporting those who experience menopause-related symptoms to stay in work with relevant support.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees of the university.

3 General Principles

- 3.1 The university recognises the significant impact that menopause-related symptoms can sometimes have on an employee's performance within their role at work. It advocates a sympathetic approach where, if menopause is potentially a factor in any capability or disciplinary matter, due consideration

will be given to resolving matters informally in the first instance, where possible.

- 3.2 The university also recognises the significant impact that menopause-related symptoms can have on an employee's attendance at work, and acknowledges that as a result there may at times be increased periods of absence. Absences related to menopause will be recorded under a specific 'menopause' code and managers will consider if menopause-related absences are part of an ongoing condition, with due consideration to relevant support and reasonable adjustments given where appropriate.

4 **Roles and responsibilities**

4.1 **Managers**

4.1.1 Managers will:

- Familiarise themselves with the university's Menopause Policy and guidance to enable them to offer the best possible support and advice for employees;
- Be willing to have open discussions and dialogues about menopause, being understanding of the sensitivity of the subject matter and respecting confidentiality;
- Consider adjustments that may be implemented to support employees experiencing menopause-related symptoms, seeking advice from Occupational Health and/or People Services as appropriate;
- Record agreed adjustments and periodically review these with the employee.

4.2 **People Services**

4.2.1 People Services will:

- Work collaboratively with managers to support them to apply this policy, offering ongoing guidance, support and advice in individual cases to ensure a fair and consistent approach;
- Review and monitor the impact of menopause in the workplace, producing reports and updates for relevant stakeholders as required and proposing and/or offering appropriate interventions (e.g., training) accordingly.

4.3 **Employees**

4.3.1 Employees will:

- Take responsibility for managing their own health, raising matters of concern with their line manager as needed;
- Contribute to and support a culture of inclusivity, compassion and tolerance, offering support and help to colleagues;

- Report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause. Employees should refer to the university's [Dignity at Work policy](#) for information on the procedure for dealing with such complaints.

4.4 Trade Unions

4.4.1 Trade Unions will:

- Advocate their support of this policy to their members;
- Work with employees and managers to support the effective implementation of this policy;
- Work in collaboration with People Services colleagues to review, develop and monitor the implementation of this policy.

5 Relevant policies and procedures

5.1 The university has a range of policies that may be relevant in supporting employees who are experiencing menopause-related symptoms. They are:

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Attendance Management Policy

6 Definitions

6.1 **Menopause** is defined as the point at which menstruation has stopped permanently – this is considered to be when an individual has not experienced a period for 12 consecutive months. It therefore actually refers to one single day. Either side of this date, an individual is perimenopausal or postmenopausal.

The average age for an individual to reach the menopause is 51¹, although the typical age range is between 45 and 55 years old².

Menopause can sometimes happen earlier or later, either naturally or for reasons such as surgery to remove the ovaries (oophorectomy) or the uterus (hysterectomy)³, cancer treatments like chemotherapy, or a genetic reason. Some trans and non-binary individuals can also experience menopausal symptoms as a result of hormonal treatments or other changes to hormonal profiles. Sometimes the reason is unknown.

6.2 **Early menopause** is defined as reaching menopause before the age of 45. In individuals under 40 this is sometimes referred to as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI).

¹ The Menopause Charity, 'What is Menopause?', <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/2021/10/19/what-is-menopause>

² National Health Service (NHS), Overview Menopause, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

³ Oophorectomy and/or hysterectomy are surgical procedures that can be linked to gender affirmation surgery

6.3 **Perimenopause** is defined as the period of time leading up to menopause when menopause-related symptoms may be experienced. This period of time can last for a few months or several years - the average period of time is around four years but symptoms can last for decades.

6.4 **Post-menopause** is defined as the period of time after the menopause has occurred but, importantly, symptoms can remain and be ongoing.

7 **Symptoms of menopause**

7.1 Menopause can affect individuals very differently. Some individuals will experience few menopause-related symptoms whereas others will experience a number of different menopause-related symptoms. Individuals may also notice that the types of menopause-related symptoms they experience, including the severity of them, change over time. Each individual's experience of menopause-related symptoms will be unique to them and the help and support they may require will therefore also be unique.

7.2 Menopause-related symptoms can impact all aspects of daily life including relationships, social life, family life and work. Some individuals will experience very severe menopause-related symptoms which have a significant impact.

7.3 Menopause-related symptoms can take different forms; physical (e.g., joint pain), psychological (e.g., difficulty concentrating) or vasomotor (e.g., hot flashes).

7.4 [Appendix A](#) outlines the common symptoms that individuals may experience during menopause.

8 **Support for menopause**

8.1 The university is committed to supporting employees who are experiencing menopause-related symptoms and there are different support options available, which include:

8.2

- [Genuinely Helpful Guide to Menopause at DMU](#) - this guide has been created by the university's [Women's Network](#) and provides useful information on the menopause, symptoms of the menopause and how individuals may access support.
- **DMU Women's Network Menopause Cafes** are held throughout the year and employees can attend to discuss menopause-related matters and share their experience. Information about events will be shared on the intranet. (For information on time off to attend university involvement groups please refer to the university's [Special Leave Policy](#).)
- **Menopause risk assessment** – this is tool that managers can use either with individuals or to assess risks that may generally exist within

the workplace in relation to menopause. It will help identify ways to minimise and eliminate identified risks.

- **Adjustments Plan for Menopausal Symptoms** - this is a tool that individuals and line managers may use to guide and structure conversations in relation to support and/or adjustments in the workplace related to menopausal symptoms. It also serves as a useful record of agreed support/adjustments that both an individual and their line manager can retain a copy of. Its use is entirely voluntary.
- **Working flexibly on a temporary basis** - a temporary flexible working arrangement may be appropriate to support symptom management. For example, this may include changing the working location (e.g. working from home); altering start and finish times; taking more frequent breaks; temporarily adjusting the workload.

Employees who require a permanent change to their working pattern should refer to the university's [Flexible Working Policy](#) for further information.

- **Working environment** - it may be appropriate to review the working environment and make changes as appropriate to support symptom management. For example, this may include locating the employee's workstation in a cooler area; providing a fan; providing a quiet space to work. (See more examples of potential adjustments on the university's menopause [Connect](#) page.)

Information about the location of changing facilities, shower facilities and the locations of sanitary vending machines around campus can be found on the Estates and Facilities [Connect](#) page.

- **Time to attend medical appointments** - the university recognises that from time to time employees may need to attend medical appointments to discuss their menopause-related symptoms. The university provides paid time off for routine medical appointments and further guidance can be found in the university's [Special Leave Policy](#).
- **Occupational Health** - the university's occupational health provider can provide useful guidance and advice to support employees who are experiencing menopause at work. The advice will be tailored to the individual and their specific role.
- **Employee Assistance Programme** - the university's employee assistance programme, PAM Assist, offers a range of advice and resources for employees, including confidential counselling, and can be accessed 24/7, 365 days of the year.

9 External support and resources

- 9.1 The following organisations provide useful information and support on the menopause:

- [Henpicked](#), one of the UK's largest, fastest-growing websites provides information on a range of menopause topics;
- [The Menopause Charity](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- [Menopause Matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause;
- The [Queer Menopause Collective](#), which provides information about the menopause and seeks to raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ menopause;
- The [National Health Service \(NHS\)](#), which provides information on the menopause as well as help and support available through the NHS, including speaking to a medical practitioner such as GP.

10 **Records, monitoring and data protection**

- 10.1 A copy of any records related to menopause-related discussions, risk assessment and/or Adjustments Plan for Menopausal Symptoms will be retained by the individual and their line manager. It will also be placed on an individual's file as a record of agreed support and adjustments. It may be reviewed as required, and a review may be initiated by either the individual or the line manager.
- 10.2 In the event of a job change, relocation or new manager, adjustments agreed as part of the Adjustments Plan for Menopausal Symptoms or risk assessment should continue to be implemented so long as they remain reasonable in the circumstances. Any proposed changes to adjustments will be discussed in full with the individual.
- 10.3 All records will be treated as confidential and will be kept in accordance with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 and DMU's Records Retention Schedule. Information contained within the Adjustments Plan for Menopausal Symptoms will not be shared without the explicit consent of the individual.
- 10.4 People Services will regularly monitor equality statistics relating to menopause-related casework and these will be shared with appropriate committees including Trade Union negotiating committees.

Appendix A - Symptoms of menopause⁴

Physical	Psychological	Vasomotor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heart Palpitations; • Irregular and/or heavy periods; • Difficulty in sleeping; • Feeling tired or lacking in energy; • Feeling dizzy or faint; • Headaches; • Tinnitus; • Dry mouth and eyes; • Sore gums; • Muscle and joint pains; • Breathing difficulties; • Needing a wee more often, or having leaks of urine; • Vaginal dryness, soreness; • More thrush, cystitis episodes; • Dry or itchy skin; • Thinning hair; • Poor sleep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low mood; • Anxiety; • Feeling tense or nervous; • Memory problems; • Attacks of anxiety or panic; • Difficulty concentrating; • Loss of interest in most things; • Feeling unhappy or depressed; • Crying spells; • Irritability; • Mood swings; • Loss of confidence; • Reduced self-esteem; • Brain fog; • Loss of interest in sex and/or level of arousal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot flushes; • Sweating at night.

This is not an exhaustive list of symptoms.

Some individuals will experience many symptoms, in varying degrees of severity, that may change over time, whilst others will experience few symptoms.

⁴ The Menopause Charity, Symptoms List, <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/2021/10/21/symptoms-list/>

Appendix B - Intersecting characteristics and menopause

The university recognises that an employee's intersecting characteristics may impact how they experience and deal with menopause-related symptoms. Managers should be understanding of this dimension when discussing menopause with employees.

- Trans, intersex and some non-binary employees can also experience menopause and may find it more difficult to discuss their symptoms and experiences, due to a perception of stigma and prejudice within the workplace. Managers should remember that menopause may be particularly challenging for trans, intersex and some non-binary colleagues because of the widely held perception that menopause is a “women’s issue”. In addition, there may be some employees who have not disclosed their trans status to their manager.
- An employee's ethnic background can impact how symptoms display as well as the types of symptoms that may be experienced. This can make it more challenging for the individual themselves and for the medical practitioners that look after them to recognise menopause-related symptoms. For example, woman from South Asia, commonly have more body aches, palpitations and urinary symptoms. This can lead to delayed diagnosis and difference in treatment experience and option.⁵
- Black employees can experience inequalities in access to health care and treatment. This can delay appropriate diagnoses or access to relevant treatment options. Managers should be aware that this may impact on the employee's attendance and create a need to attend additional medical appointments.
- An employee's cultural and religious background may also impact the experience of menopause. Within some cultures it is not a topic readily discussed, and may be viewed as ‘taboo’. This can make it difficult for some employees to feel comfortable discussing their symptoms and accessing support. In other cultures, old age is revered and the opposite may be true.
- Disabled employees and employees with underlying health conditions may experience an exacerbation of their existing impairment or experience new impairments as a result of menopause-related symptoms. Medication prescribed to disabled employees experiencing menopause-related symptoms may interfere negatively with existing medications the employee is taking, or have an adverse impact on existing impairments. In addition, the particular impairment or health condition may be made worse by menopause-related symptoms and may make it more difficult to get relevant medical support or distinguish the symptom as distinct and related to menopause. Managers should be aware of these particularities when discussing menopause and possible support with disabled employees.

⁵ [Cultural differences in Menopause - The Menopause Charity](#)