

Menopause Policy



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The Board of Management (or any person/group with delegated authority from the Board) reserves the right to amend this document at any time should the need arise following consultation with employee representatives. This Policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment, which is published on our website: <https://www.glasgowkelvin.ac.uk/equality-diversity/>

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1. Introduction

Glasgow Kelvin College is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all staff. It recognises that menopausal symptoms can impact on women, trans and non-binary people experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

The College is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports staff experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

2. Aim of Policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- ensure managers are aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work;
- foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner;
- raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause;
- enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs;
- outline support and reasonable adjustments available; and
- help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

This policy is part of the College's commitment to:

- equality and diversity and creating a workplace that respects and values individual differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of the College as an employer of choice; and
- ensuring the health and safety and wellbeing of its staff and will ensure the workplace does not make the menopausal symptoms of employees worse.

The College recognises that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff who are employed at Glasgow Kelvin College.

This is the approved Policy of the Board of Management of Glasgow Kelvin College produced in partnership with staff, management and Trade Unions.

4. Definition of the Menopause

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods.

Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and peri-menopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms. Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

Some studies suggest that Black women may have more prevalent and severe symptoms. Disabled women and those with pre-existing health conditions, may find that the menopause can aggravate their existing impairments and health conditions or even trigger new ones. Menopausal symptoms can in turn also be made worse by the disabled woman's impairment or health condition.

Some:

- trans men may experience natural menopausal symptoms;
- trans women may experience pseudo-menopausal symptoms related to their hormone therapy treatment; and
- non-binary people may experience menopausal symptoms.

The College recognises that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Menopausal symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate;
- Heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic;
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance;
- Low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems;
- Urinary problems - more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal;
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort;
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness;
- Weight gain;
- Headaches and migraines;
- Menopausal hair loss; and
- Osteoporosis – the strength and density of the bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis.

Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with.

Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. The College has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Employees are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs. Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a member of the HR team.

5. Support for Employees Experiencing the Menopause

The College is committed to working with staff and its recognised Trade Unions to take positive action to support staff experiencing the menopause.

It will raise awareness of the impact of the menopause so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

All awareness raising and associated training will be aimed at supporting the development of an understanding and supportive culture. All College policies and procedures should take account of the effects of the menopausal symptoms to ensure that employees experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged as a result of their symptoms.

The College recognises that some employees experiencing the menopause may find that related symptoms may impact on their health and wellbeing, and it aims to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals. The College recognises that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to let their line manager know if they are struggling with symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with College's data protection policy.

A Human Resources representative is available to employees experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager, (particularly if they are male). Employees may also prefer to discuss their problems with an alternative manager and/or a trade union representative.

Managers should acknowledge that there may be an additional need for sickness absence by employees experiencing the menopause in order to manage their menopausal symptoms. Absence will be recorded as related to menopausal symptoms where disclosed and managers will consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers. Further details can be found in the College's Attendance Management and Support Policy and Procedure.

The College recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically.

Line managers with appropriate support will undertake a gender sensitive risk assessment to consider the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

The College will seek to establish a menopause support group to support employees affected by the menopause directly or indirectly, where employees can share knowledge and information, gain peer support and provide feedback on College policies that may have an impact on staff experiencing the menopause.

The group is organised and run by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager.

Employees who are experiencing the menopause may apply for the following adjustments to support them at work:

- Control over environmental factors – with provision of desk fans on request, review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators, fitting blinds to windows, greater access to chilled drinking water, and to toilets and washing facilities.
- Where uniforms are provided, staff may request that items ordered contain natural fibres wherever possible.
- Flexibility over uniform and dress codes should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating, and provision of additional spare uniforms.
- Changing/washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day.
- For employees who are required to drive as part of their usual work pattern, duration of travel to be reduced and increased rest breaks provided.
- Flexible working arrangements including options for flexitime (to work round symptoms or adjusting start and finish times for example), more details can be found in the College's Family Friendly and Flexible Working Policy and Procedure. The College seeks to balance the needs of its staff with the requirements of delivering a high-quality service for students and the communities it serves. Good working practices, and the benefits derived from them are key to delivering effective services, increasing morale, commitment and improving recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced staff.
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, and if required providing cover as necessary for these breaks where staffing levels permit.

- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments, more details can be found in the College's Family Friendly and Flexible Working Policy and Procedure
- Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings or on reception because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day where possible.
- Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support.

(For further advice on reasonable adjustments available contact Human Resources).

This is not a definitive list of adjustments. The College working staff and its recognised Trade Unions, will consider additional suggestions put forward by members of staff, union representatives and the menopause support group.

Confidential support is available for individual employees from the Employee Assistance Programme. The Employee Assistance Programme provides independent counselling and advice – face to face counselling, 24 hour help line and access to the website. An online site is also available to support employees. The web based service is designed to help with today's challenges and to provide a chance to prepare for any major events that may arise in the future. Online is accessed through www.pamassist.co.uk using the username: GKC and password: GKC1

Details of a number of external organisations which can offer support or advice are detailed in appendix 1.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Responsibilities of Managers

Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the College's responsibilities. Awareness campaigns on women's health issues including the menopause will be provided.

Managers (with the support of Human Resources where requested) should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues.

Managers should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially and professionally.

Managers will consider requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the **menopause** and put in place appropriate support or adjustments in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.

The College will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination,

harassment or victimisation in accordance with the appropriate policy and procedure, these Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure, Grievance Policy and Procedure and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure). Confidentiality will be respected at all times.

All requests for support or adjustments must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.

Managers will support employees in informing colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

6.2. Responsibilities of Employees

All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their health.

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can be effective in their jobs.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee assistance programme and other external organisations (see sections below headed 'Self-management for Staff Experiencing the menopause' and 'Appendix 1 – for supporting organisations') as well as participating in the menopause support group.

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause.

If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to the menopause, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

7. Self-Management for Staff Experiencing the Menopause

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence. You should consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP;
- Discussing symptoms with your manager or with the alternative contact and with your trade union representative and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments; and
- Contacting the Employee Assistance Provider.
- Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:

- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and in not gaining weight;
- Drinking plenty of water;
- Exercising regularly – to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels;
- Not smoking – to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as a cancer, heart disease and stroke;
- Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food – all of which can trigger hot flushes;
- Having access to natural light;
- Staying cool at night – wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats.
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation – to reduce stress levels and improve mood (through, for example, activities such as mindfulness, yoga and tai chi); and
- Trying vaginal lubricant or moisturiser – available from shops and pharmacies for anyone experiencing vaginal dryness.

8. Review and Monitoring

All new employees, supervisors and managers will receive induction on College policies and procedures.

Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted and available on the staff intranet.

The recommendations of the menopause support group on how working conditions, practices and policies may impact on staff experiencing the menopause, will be considered jointly by trade union representatives and management.

The purpose of this monitoring and review is to identify where reasonable adjustments can be made to working conditions, practices and policies in order to make this policy effective.

9. Data Protection

The College will process and manage any personal data collected in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.

10. Supporting Policies and Procedures

- Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure for Recruitment and Selection
- Equality and Diversity Policy

- Lone Working Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Family Friendly and Flexible Working Policy and Procedure
- Attendance Management and Support Policy and Procedure

11. Glossary

Menopause – a natural transition stage in most women’s lives lasting four to eight years, although for some women it can be much longer. Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms as a result of the menopause.

Premature menopause – for some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. This is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency. The NHS estimates that 1 in every 100 women will experience premature menopause.

Medical or surgical menopause – there are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the woman’s age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a woman’s ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy.

Perimenopause – a period of time before the menopause, in the years leading up to the menopause where there can be significant changes for women, including irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding and many of the classic symptoms associated with menopause.

Post-menopause – a term used when a woman’s periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.

Appendix 1

www.menopausematters.co.uk

www.womens-health-concern.org

<https://www.daisynetwork.org>

www.menopause-exchange.co.uk

www.menopausehealthmatters.com

Further Reading:

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/symptoms-of-menopause/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/menopause-and-weight-gain/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/menopause-insomnia/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/menopause-diet/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/menopause-diet/exercise-for-women/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/hormone-replacement-therapy/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/menopause-and-weight-gain/osteoporosisand-menopause/>

<https://menopausehealthmatters.com/heart-disease-in-women/>

www.menopauseacademy.co.uk

www.thebms.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information