



MENOPAUSE POLICY

Policy principles

This procedure has been agreed by the Joint Unions Consultative Committee in consultation with the University.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all staff.

The purpose of this policy

Aston University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone working here. As the menopause affects women at some point in their lives, providing support to those experiencing symptoms is an important aspect of our overall commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as looking after the health and wellbeing of all staff.

This policy and associated guidance notes, aim to ensure that all staff understand what the menopause is, to foster an environment that does not treat it as a taboo subject and ensure staff can openly and comfortably discuss it without fear of being shamed or stigmatised.

To assist, we have provided a separate '**Menopause – Guidance for Managers and Employees**' document to support discussions between staff and line managers, and to highlight the type of support that is available.

What is the menopause?

The menopause refers to the time when a woman stops having menstrual periods, and is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51. The menopause is the result of a significant change in hormone levels. For example, the level of oestrogen that is produced reduces dramatically. This, and other hormonal changes, can result in debilitating physical symptoms, and can have a significant impact on mental wellbeing.

The menopause often does not occur abruptly, and can last for several years on either side of a woman's last menstrual period. The period of time over which a woman experiences hormonal changes associated with the menopause is sometimes known as the perimenopause.

The menopause can also occur at a younger age, and this happens for around 1% of women. When the menopause occurs before the age of 45 years, it is normally known as early menopause. When the menopause occurs before the age of 40 years, it is normally known as premature ovarian insufficiency.

Some women experience the menopause early, but temporarily, when it is medically induced, for example as part of a treatment plan for gynaecological conditions. In some cases, women will enter the menopause permanently and abruptly as a result of surgery, or treatment for conditions such as breast cancer.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
<p>The employee</p>	<p>All employees, regardless of whether they are experiencing menopausal symptoms or not, should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that strict confidentiality and discretion are maintained. • Take personal responsibility to look after their personal health and wellbeing. • Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy. • Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment. • Be willing to help and support their colleagues. <p>The menopause affects women in different ways and can be a challenging and unsettling time. If you are experiencing menopausal symptoms, we recommend that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are open in conversations with managers, Human Resources (HR) and Occupational Health (OH) about your symptoms, how they may be affecting you at work and what support you may need to manage them. • Speak to your HR Business Partner or Trade Union Representative if you feel unable speak to your line manager. • Rest assured that confidentiality is respected at all times.
<p>The manager</p>	<p>All managers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that strict confidentiality and discretion are maintained. • Familiarise themselves with the separate Menopause – Guidance for Managers and Employees. • Be ready to have open discussions with staff, treating any discussions sensitively and professionally and appreciating the personal nature of these discussions. • Bear in mind that staff may prefer to speak to a female colleague, and be willing to facilitate this if appropriate. • Review and agree with the individual how they can best be supported, and any adjustments they may require.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record what support and adjustments have been agreed and any actions to be implemented. • Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates. <p>If adjustments are unsuccessful or if symptoms are proving more severe, the manager may at this or any other point, do the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice. • Review any advice provided by Occupational Health and implement their recommendations where reasonably practical. • Update the action plan and maintain ongoing dialogue and review.
Occupational Health	<p>The role of Occupational Health is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing. • Provide advice and guidance on managing menopausal symptoms. • Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice. • Provide support and advice to HR and line managers on reasonable adjustments, if required. • Occupational health or other providers may be asked to conduct briefing sessions for employees.
Human Resources	<p>The role of the Human Resources department is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer guidance to managers and employees on the interpretation of this Policy. • Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice. • Refer to Occupational Health services. • Implement training sessions and develop briefing sessions for employees. • Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance. • Support employees in securing an alternative route to support, for example, in situations where a member of staff does not feel comfortable about discussing the menopause with their line manager.

The Trade Union representative	<p>There are two trade unions at Aston, UNITE represents grades 1-6 plus technical staff in higher grades, and UCU represents staff in grade 7 and above.</p> <p>The role of the Trade Union representative is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support and advice to their members on their specific situation. This can include informal advice, such as on relationships with managers and colleagues, as well as assisting with formal processes such as performance management. • Raise collective issues where appropriate.
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Confidentiality and the retention of records

The policy seeks to ensure that employee matters relating to Menopause and associated outcomes such as absence will be dealt with sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of the individuals concerned.

Employee personal data will be processed and stored in a secure location in compliance General Data Protection Regulations and Aston University procedures.

Author and owner:	Human Resources
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Version	Date	Change
1	09/09/2019	New Policy