



C.9 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

University of Limpopo			
Title:	Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Policy and Procedure		
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1. DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

Council	means the governing body of the University of Limpopo (UL);
Counselling	means a therapeutic intervention by a trained professional;
EAPA-SA	means Employee Assistance Professional Association of South Africa
EAP Practitioner	is a trained professional;
Employee	means, in terms of the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any person, excluding and independent contractor, who works for UL and who receives, or is entitled to receive, remuneration; or (b) any person who, in any manner, assists in carrying out or conducting the business of UL;

The above will be read in conjunction with section 200A of the LRA and section 83A of the BCEA, as amended.

Employee Assistance Programme

means a work-based intervention programme aimed at improving the quality of life of employees that is designed to assist in the identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect work performance of an employee;

ESP

means an external service provider;

HPCSA

means the Health Professions Council of South Africa;

HR

means Human Resources;

HR Assessment and Consultation team

means a multi-disciplinary team which may include the employee, line manager, union representative, EAP practitioner/specialist, occupational health and safety practitioner and other human resources functionaries such as human resource officer, employee relations officer, performance management specialist or any other relevant role-player;

ERBF

means the UL Employee Relations Bargaining Forum

SACSSP

means the South African Council for Social Service Professions

2. PREAMBLE

Employees of an organisation are its most valuable asset. However, challenges in life are inevitable and these challenges can affect employees' well-being, work performance and job satisfaction. The University of Limpopo (UL) cares about the health and wellbeing of its employees, and through its Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), offers to facilitate access to confidential professional services to employees whose work performance may be or have the potential to be adversely affected by personal challenges and experiences.

3. AIM

This policy seeks to:

- 3.1 promote a framework for coordinating, directing and implementing appropriate and integrated EAP interventions and initiatives;
- 3.2 contribute to the enhancement of employee productivity, workplace efficiency, effectiveness and overall organisational health;
- 3.3 establish and maintain a holistic and an integrated approach to employee wellness and to timeously remedy personal, social, physical and emotional problems of employees;
- 3.4 support the institutional strategy by enhancing talent management, thereby ensuring talent management, commitment and retention; and
- 3.5 support UL's aspiration towards being a high-performing higher education institution and an employer of choice.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all UL employees. To the extent that the nature of the EAP intervention requires the involvement of the employee's family members, they will be included in such an intervention. However, if, for good reason(s), there are financial costs to be borne by the University, those will be limited to cover the employee only.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

UL is committed to implementing a comprehensive employee assistance programme for employees, which seeks to:

- 5.1 render a confidential service through offering equitable, preventative and remedial services;
- 5.2 provide assistance to employees through timeous identification and resolution of problems that affect or may affect work performance or employee wellness;
- 5.3 assist employees to achieve acceptable levels of work performance as a result of emotional and physical wellness;

- 5.4 identify reasons for poor work performance;
- 5.5 timeously identify, assess and refer troubled employees either internally or externally for specialized treatment;
- 5.6 enhance the overall quality of work-life for all employees;
- 5.7 establish and maintain a holistic approach to problem-solving;
- 5.8 enhance employee engagement, commitment and retention; and
- 5.9 comply with the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995 (LRA) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997 (BCEA).

6. PRINCIPLES

6.1 Inclusivity

EAP will deal with all problems that are likely to affect work performance and job satisfaction. These problems may include, but not limited to mental and physical health, marital and other interpersonal relationships, family, legal, financial, substance abuse, absenteeism, stress, conflict, emotional concerns or other personal concerns, anxiety, depression, phobias, domestic violence, divorce, child care, elder care, addictive behaviours such as substance abuse or gambling, the death or terminal illness of family members or close friends, eating disorders, career-related difficulties, such as job relocation, adjustment and more.

6.2 Confidentiality

Personal information of employees utilizing the programme will be treated in a confidential manner in line with relevant legislation. Such information will not be disclosed to anyone without the written consent of the employee concerned.

6.3 Accessibility

- 6.3.1 All permanent employees, employees on fixed-term contracts with full benefits and their immediate family members and all other employees who are eligible in terms of the new amendments in the Labour Relations Act (LRA) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Equity Act (BCEA), should

have reasonable access to co-sourced EAP services irrespective of geographic location.

6.3.2 All other fixed-term contract employees will have full access to the in-house EAP services.

6.4 Voluntarism

No employee will be forced to utilize or participate in the EAP. An employee experiencing problems can access EAP directly through contacting EAP specialist/practitioner by email, telephonically or through the Organisation Development and Talent Management (Employee Health and Wellness Section) to make an appointment for:

- The employee;
- Colleagues or a family member;
- line manager or supervisor concerned about the wellness of the employee.

Although the employee has the right to request, accept or refuse EAP assistance, participation in the programme does not indemnify an employee from corrective or disciplinary action for continued sub-standard work performance¹.

6.5 Neutrality

The role and function of EAP should not be affected by collective bargaining issues pursued by management and unions and should not be in contradiction with existing administrative procedures and contractual obligations. Furthermore, EAP professionals will strive to provide services that are fair, objective and neutral without any prejudice or bias. EAP professionals/specialists/practitioners therefore do not testify in disciplinary hearings but will write a report, if required, if they have consulted, counselled or referred an employee for applicable treatment and assistance. The report will indicate the extent to which the employee has been able to comply with the treatment plan and whether progress was made. No confidential information will be disclosed in the report unless the concerned employee has given his/her written informed consent.

¹ Refer to the IPMS

6.6 Impartiality

Participation in the programme will not prejudice an employee's job security or promotion opportunities.

6.7 Dignity

Employees on EAP will be accorded the same treatment of respect and dignity that all employees not on the programme are accorded. Harassment and/or victimization is not permitted. If identified or reported to the EAP practitioner; measures must be put in place to address the harassment and/or victimization, in accordance with UL policies.

6.8 Disciplinary procedures

Referring an employee to EAP programme as a result of disciplinary process is part of corrective action.

An employee who is undergoing EAP will not be subjected to a disciplinary process related to the EAP intervention and assistance. This provision excludes employees who approach EAP at the face of discipline. ***3.7 of DC

6.9 Professionalism

EAP specialists will be properly qualified and registered with their respective professional bodies. Psychologists need to be registered with the Health Profession Council of South Africa (HPCSA), social workers with the Council for Social Workers and nurses with the South African Nursing Council.

6.10 Cost effectiveness and efficiency

The provision of EAP is a short-term based intervention which entitles employees to a maximum of eight sessions of professional assistance. Long-term assistance such as depression and substance abuse, addictive behaviour or physical illness will be referred to external service providers for long-term therapy. This will be done after a thorough assessment has been conducted by the EAP specialist handling the case/referral. If further counselling is recommended or if specialized services outside the scope of the EAP are

recommended, this will be at the expense of the employee. This may be covered by the employee's medical aid benefits. If employees do not have medical aid, they will be referred to government facilities/institutions.

7. SERVICE COMPONENTS

7.1. Services

An EAP practitioner or specialist provides services either in person or, if required through a designated service provider or partnership. Such services can be in the form of face-to-face, telephonic or electronic contact.

7.1.1 Counselling services

Employees may consult the EAP specialist/practitioner regarding:

- (a) Work-related challenges or concerns (attendance, absenteeism, poor work performance, incapacity and incompatibility, workplace conflict, change management, stress, burnout and coping skills, trauma debriefing, substance abuse or dependence);
- (b) Personal or domestic challenges which may affect their work performance (family, domestic or relationship issues, grief and bereavement, financial, legal and health problems);
- (c) The EAP practitioner/specialist can assist employees by providing short-term counselling services and referral on a broad range of aspects.

7.2 Referral to the programme

7.2.1 No employee will be forced to attend EAP services. Referral to the programme can be done through one of the following three methods:

- (a) Self-referral (voluntary by the employee);
- (b) Informal referral (suggested by the line manager, supervisor, colleague/s, family or union);
- (c) Supervisory referral (formal/management) (employee is referred to EAP by his/her line manager) with adequate documentation of the continuing pattern of unsatisfactory work performance or noticeable concerns about the employee's wellbeing. The line manager can consult EAP regarding when referral should take place.

7.2.2 When a referral is made by a line manager (formal), the employee should be informed of the referral and the reasons for the referral. An appointment

at the Organisation Development and Talent Management (Employee Health and Wellness Section) can be made by the employee concerned or the line manager on behalf of the employee with his/her consent. Before referral the supervisor needs to complete a supervisor referral form and also obtain the employee's informed consent to send through the information to EAP.

- 7.2.3 If an employee is undergoing a procedure such as a disciplinary hearing or poor performance and the person managing the process finds it necessary to refer the employee to EAP, he or she must provide a written reason for the referral and expectation of the outcome.

7.3 Confidentiality

EAP specialist/s or practitioner/s will secure and protect all confidential records of employees under strict control in their own offices and on the caseload database system. Such records will not be accessible to anyone not directly linked with EAP.

7.4 Time off to attend EAP

Employees should be given time off to attend the EAP counselling sessions. The line manager should use his/her discretion since these are scheduled during working hours. An employee requiring assistance must not be hindered from attending EAP sessions or any other outside treatment/s recommended.

7.5 EAP cost

EAP will provide a maximum of eight sessions. Costs of referrals, e.g., to rehabilitation facilities for substance abuse and psychiatric hospitals for long term mental health problems will not be covered by EAP. Employees with medical aid will be encouraged to use such facility when there is cover for the prevailing mental health condition. Where employees are not on a medical aid, they will be referred to public facilities for assistance.

7.6 Responsibilities for service providers

Service level agreements should be in place in instances where EAP service provision is done by an external service provider.

If further counselling is recommended or if specialized services outside the scope of the EAP are recommended, this will be for the employee's account.

8. GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT ROLES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

8.1 INTERNAL

- 8.1.1 Council is responsible for approval of the policy and monitoring its implementation.
- 8.1.2 Executive Management and the Vice Chancellor and Principal are responsible for creating a work environment that allows for the coordination and implementation of this policy.
- 8.1.3 The Chief Human Resources Officer is responsible for the strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of EAP services and ensuring that services are provided according to the norms and standards as set by the EAP-SA.
- 8.1.4 The Directorate: Organisation Development and Talent Management is responsible for the coordination of the EAP at UL.
- 8.1.5 The Health and Wellness Steering Committee is responsible to ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to EAP and the monitoring of the EAP implementation.
- 8.1.6 The Executive Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, managers and supervisors are responsible for:
- (a) Identifying employees that require EAP through regular performance monitoring;
 - (b) Identifying health and wellness needs of employees and ensuring that the needs are relayed to the Director: Organisation Development and Talent Management.
- 8.1.7 EAP specialist/practitioner is responsible for:
- (a) Implementation of the EAP policy, guidelines and procedures and the provision of EAP services;
 - (b) Providing advice to supervisors and line managers regarding how to manage employees who experience problems and who require the EAP's assistance.

- 8.1.8 Where required, the EAP practitioner/specialist will work together with other HR specialists and practitioners on EAP cases that require a multi-disciplinary team approach.
- 8.1.9 The UL Employee Relations Bargaining Forum (UL-ERBF) serves as effective communication and advocacy tool between EAP and the larger workforce.
- 8.1.10 Employees are encouraged to actively participate in the services offered by the EAP and are welcome to bring health and wellness needs to the attention of EAP practitioner/specialist.
- 8.1.11 Employees are responsible for maintaining satisfactory job performance, and in the event that personal problems are causing deteriorating of work performance, the employee has the responsibility to obtain the necessary help to bring job performance up to an acceptable level.

8.2 EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS (ESP)

- 8.2.1 External service providers (ESPs) will provide a client relationship manager to oversee the effective delivery of all aspects of the EAP or co-source services to UL. This includes, service promotion, liaison with UL's employee health and wellness custodians, reporting, organisational consultancy and complaints resolution.
- 8.2.2 If required, the external service provider will, in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders, make inputs into the annual integrated health and wellness plan within the first month of the contractual year, encompassing organisation units' needs, which will be revised on a quarterly basis within 12 working days of the month following the reporting quarter, which is in accordance with emerging risks and trends within UL and its evolving wellness strategy.
- 8.2.3 The external service provider will collaborate with UL to align their wellness calendar to UL's wellness calendar. Similarly, where applicable, Employee Wellness Programme information and material distributed to UL electronically will be aligned to the calendar.
- 8.2.4 The external service provider will participate in wellness days as per the Organisation's request.

8.2.5 The external service provider will provide a professional counselling service to all eligible UL employees and their dependents through face-to-face where required.

8.2.6 The external service provider will provide reports to the Director: Organisation Development and Talent Management, detailing data and information covering the programme management metrics, an overview of deliverables and programme updates.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

This policy becomes effective on the date on which it is approved by Council.

10. EFFECT OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Any non-compliance with this policy must be dealt with in terms of the normal institutional governance and management processes, including possible disciplinary action where appropriate.

11. DATE OF REVIEW

This policy must be reviewed after every three year and/or as often as is necessary.