

# Sabbatical Officer Wellbeing Audit Tool

**A tool for Organisations  
Representing Students**

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# Engaging The Elephant in the SU

## Explaining "ORS"



**Ollie Kasper-Hope** (He/Him) • You

CEO at Alkhemy | Trustee and Deputy Chair at Chester SU | Coach, Senior Leader & Trainer | **Student voice, community...**  
6d • Edited •

Hmmm, every time I write SUs I feel like I'm not being inclusive to associations, guilds and other organisations representing students.

I know SU is the collective term but I'm going to change this to organisations representing students (ORS).

This will debut in our "Sabb Wellbeing Audit Tool" (Also must think of a better title for this!)

## Executive Summary and Introduction

The role of a sabbatical officer in Organisations Representing Students (ORS) is a unique and demanding one. These elected student representatives are responsible for representing the views and interests of thousands of students, and for delivering a wide range of services and activities that enhance the student experience. However, this role can also be challenging and stressful, with sabbatical officers often facing high levels of pressure and responsibility.

The role can require a great deal of emotional and mental energy, and it is not uncommon for sabbatical officers to experience burnout and compassion fatigue. The pressure to represent and advocate for thousands of students, while also contributing to the day-to-day running of the ORS, can take a real toll. It is essential that ORS take proactive measures to support and empower their sabbatical officers to practice self-awareness, self-care, emotional intelligence as well as to set and maintain professional boundaries.

This audit tool is not designed to be a silver bullet, but it has been created to offer ORS an assessment of the resources and support that their organisations have available to their sabbatical officers and how they may wish to improve and promote success in these roles.

The tool is divided into key principles that reflect best practice in this area. These principles cover:

- Training and development
- Mentoring and coaching
- Encouragement of creative conflict
- Promotion of a healthy work-life balance
- Appropriate benefits and support
- A coordinated and holistic approach

**This tool is designed to give individuals the best opportunity to thrive in a supportive, inclusive and healthy culture**

So much of what ORS do and resource revolves around the carousel of the sabbatical year and so it is key to ensure that organisations can gain a clear understanding of their approach to sabbatical wellbeing.

It is important to note that the tool is not a prescriptive or exhaustive list, but it is a good starting point to identify areas that may need attention. It is also vital to remember that this is not a one-time exercise but a continuous process that needs to be reviewed and updated regularly. The data collected can be used to identify trends and patterns, and to monitor progress over time. It would be remiss of me not to mention that organisations can only do so much and to appreciate that there is also a personal responsibility to maintain one's own wellbeing, this tool is designed to give individuals the best opportunity to thrive in a supportive, inclusive and healthy culture. This should be part of a whole-organisation approach to support wellbeing and mental health.

It's also crucial to highlight that sabbatical officer roles can be a great way to gain valuable experience and skills that can be used in future careers, and to make a real difference to both the organisation and students.

When I worked for Student Minds in a former life I led on the development of a programme for ORS, and part of that was authoring the "[Mentally Healthy SUs Framework](#)". Whilst this tool has not been produced with Student Minds, in many ways I think of this tool as a spiritual evolution from this framework and would like to thank Student Minds for the opportunity to lead on that area of their work.

I would like to thank Dr. Rachel Jakeman for her clinical and medical oversight of this audit tool, as well as Lucy MacDonald, Lucy's lived experience as a recent SU President has directly impacted on this content as well. This highlights the need to co-create with people that have professional expertise and lived experience.

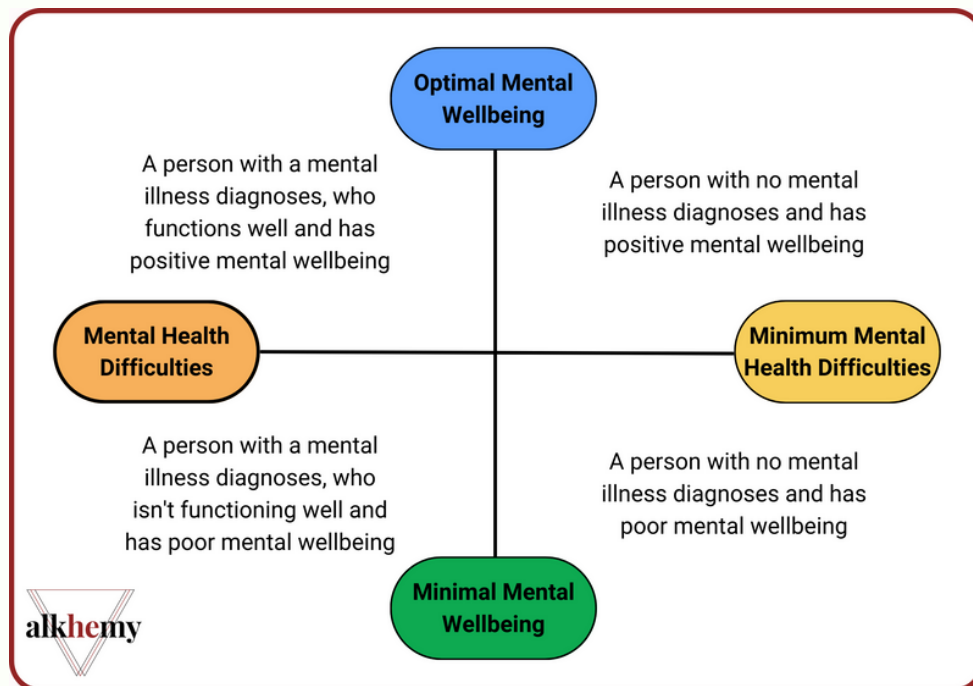
I hope that this tool can be a useful addition to your toolbox for supporting sabbatical officers, and I look forward to hearing reflections, feelings and feedback from you all on its use.

*Ollie Kasper Hope*



# Mental wellbeing in the workplace

When we talk about "sabbatical officer wellbeing", we could be referring to a number of different areas at the same time. This audit tool mainly focuses on mental and emotional wellbeing, appreciating that mental health and wellbeing exists on a continuum and can overlap with physical and mental illness. Our approach is explained by the below diagram:



*Adapted from: Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 43(2), 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197>*

Workplace wellbeing is a critical aspect of organisational success, as it affects the health, satisfaction and performance of employees. One of the major risks to workplace wellbeing is stress, which can be caused by a variety of factors such as job demands, job security, workload, and long working hours. Chronic stress has been linked to various physical and psychological health problems, including heart disease, depression and anxiety. (J.C. Quick and L.E. Tetrick, 2003)

Compassion fatigue can also be a risk factor for workplace wellbeing. This condition is usually experienced by individuals who provide support and care to others, such as healthcare workers and support workers (S. C Figley, 2002) . Although, quite rightly, Sabbatical Officers are not usually considered on the frontline of student support, there can be instances where they are in equivalent situations, such as navigating student deaths, managing disclosures, involvement in staffing issues and working with students that are experiencing stressful situations. Compassion fatigue is characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment - these can have serious consequences.

Burnout is a long-term response to chronic stress and presents as feelings of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout has been linked to reduced job satisfaction, increased absenteeism and poor job performance (H. Maslach, M. Leiter and R. Jackson, 1986). Burnout, as defined by The World Health Organisation in 2019 as "resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed". The key thing to note here are "chronic" and "not successfully managed" - we are not saying that the aim should be to avoid stress completely, a lot of times stress is a healthy, natural and appropriate response to situations.

It is not uncommon for sabbatical officers to respond to the high stakes and demanding roles by "getting their heads down" and "getting on with it". After all, it's "only for a year or two" - however there is no way of knowing, if they've had a particularly tough time, the impact that has on the individual in the long term. It is possible that experiences described by former sabbatical officers could be seen as post-traumatic stress (PTSD). PTSD can develop after someone has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. It presents as re-experiencing the event, avoidance, negative changes in mood or thoughts, and changes in the physical and emotional reactions.

**We are not saying that the aim should be to avoid stress completely, a lot of times stress is a healthy, natural and appropriate response to situations.**

There is not much (if any) research specific link to sabbatical officers and PTSD, but there is evidence that a negative work environment can contribute to the development of mental health conditions. A far-ranging review in the Journal of Affective Disorders in 2017 found that workplace stress and traumatic events are risk factors for the development of PTSD, as was a similar study published in 2016 by the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology which found that exposure to traumatic events at work and work-related stress were associated with an increased risk of developing PTSD.



### Pinned Tweet



**Ella** @ellaisrlyonline · 28/10/2022

For any ex SU sabbs on here...do you ever remember something you had to go through as a sabb fresh out of uni and, now having experienced other jobs, laugh out loud at how traumatic/stressful/weird your experience was?



57



52



334



*Ella Harvey, Vice President Welfare, Queen Mary Students' Union, 2018 - 2019*

It's also important to acknowledge that not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will develop PTSD. Factors such as individual resilience, coping strategies and support from friends, family and clinicians can also play a vital role.

So we see that stress, compassion fatigue, burnout and even PTSD could be considered significant risk factors for the workplace wellbeing of sabbatical officers.

We will now run you through the way that Alchemy classifies the day-to-day duties of sabbatical officers to understand the types and volume of work that can be expected.

# Duties, tasks and the day-to-day of being a sabbatical officer

It is important to remember that sabbatical roles are elected and in executing their duties they have to wear many hats, in working with and reviewing sabbatical officer roles, Alkhemy find it useful to define the types of duties in three categories; **operational, representational and "prerepresentational"**.

- **Operational** duties consist of those that are specifically in the delivery of projects, services or administrative actions.
- **Representational** duties are those duties where it is appropriate only for an elected individual to carry out.
- **Prerepresentational** are those duties that staff working to support sabbs to be representational carry out, and the duties that sabbatical officers carry out in order to be supported and prepared.

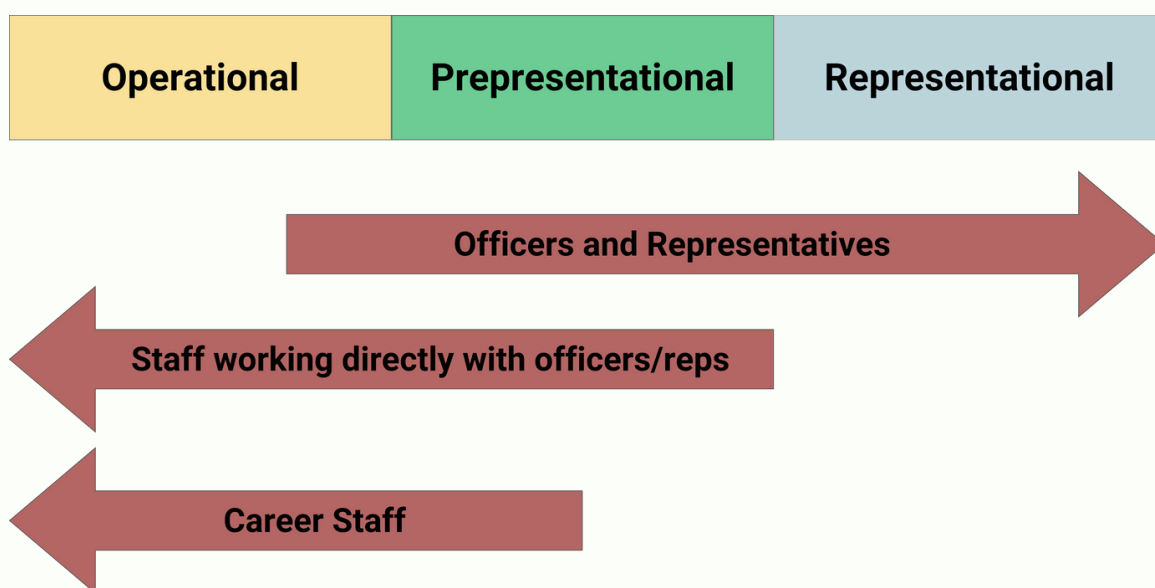


The table below gives some examples of the three different categories of duties:

*Please note, this is not an exhaustive list or intended to be prescriptive*

Operational	Prepresentational	Representational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Room and venue bookings</li> <li>• Setting up regular meetings</li> <li>• Budget management</li> <li>• Responding to &amp; fielding individual student enquiries</li> <li>• Helping student groups with their budgets</li> <li>• Ordering supplies and materials</li> <li>• Designing training for students</li> <li>• Writing policies and regulations for student groups</li> <li>• Minuting and clerking meetings</li> <li>• Dispensing advice</li> <li>• Designing different types of research</li> <li>• Copywriting</li> <li>• Coordinating and managing social media channels</li> <li>• Reception duties</li> <li>• Supporting part time officers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing up an analysis and briefing of student research</li> <li>• Completing a policy briefing on national issues</li> <li>• Reading through committee papers and briefing the officer/rep</li> <li>• Briefing and debriefing committee meetings</li> <li>• Coaching and mentoring of officers/ reps</li> <li>• Writing up a campaigns strategy/plan</li> <li>• Utilising project management tools to aid the delivery of an officers/rep project/campaign</li> <li>• Training officers on key skills and attributes</li> <li>• Analysing student feedback</li> <li>• Working to prepare agendas for internal meetings, such as student council</li> <li>• Writing up a report for officers/ reps on advice case statistics</li> <li>• Briefing officers on training content delivery</li> <li>• Officers/ reps feeding back on a meeting to key staff in the SU</li> <li>• Officers requesting a briefing for a meeting or a report</li> <li>• Officers/ reps being present and briefed by supporting staff</li> <li>• Officers requesting materials be ordered or venues/rooms be booked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking/listening to students</li> <li>• Championing and representationally leading campaigns</li> <li>• Prepping for committee/board meetings</li> <li>• Attending and lobbying at those meetings</li> <li>• Advocating on behalf of students</li> <li>• Working with students to empower them to create change</li> <li>• Regularly meeting with key influencers and stakeholders from the University and wider community</li> <li>• Creating content that completes the feedback loop with members, such as blogs, vlogs and posting on officer profiles on social media</li> </ul>

The diagram below is a continuum that looks to explore these duties and where personnel should broadly fall within the continuum. We see that sabbs fall within all 3 but in the main are representational and prerepresentational. It should be noted officers are not expected to have no operational duties but these should fall into everyday administrative and logistical tasks. The reality is also that a lot of ORS do not have access to vast resources and so it may be that on occasions officers and reps are required to work in the operational area of the continuum, but the aim should be for this to be an exception and not the general rule.



You may be reading this and thinking that this only applies to ORS that have a high number of staff. In our movement you can see relatively small ORS that have four or five sabbatical officers and the question here is - do you need that many sabbs and how much of their roles is actually operational? It is worth thinking about your staff support: sabbatical officer ratio and consider if it's better to have 2 sabbatical officers that can be more representative, advocating for students and well supported by a team of staff members, rather than 4 or 5 sabbs that struggle to navigate the administrative, operational, representational and strategic aspects of their roles. Many sabbaticals are also trustees and directors, a duty that some describe as "inadvertent" than a deliberate decision to become a trustee/director - we should not underestimate the impact that this has on workload and emotional bandwidth.

We will now run you through the different themes at play and the self-audit tool to start to measure how well your organisation is currently managing these risks.

# Training and Development

Training and development plays a crucial role in managing the risks to workplace wellbeing for sabbatical officers. Training and development can provide sabbatical officers with the necessary skills, knowledge and support to effectively manage and mitigate stress. ORS should offer opportunities for their sabbs to learn about healthy coping strategies, time management, stress reduction and work-life balance.

A healthy approach in this area can also create a positive and supportive work culture that values and makes employee wellbeing a priority.

More generally, continuous training and development plays a crucial role in reducing the risk of burnout. So, although sabbaticals may not be employed for very long periods of time, by providing opportunities for growth and advancement, we can increase their knowledge and skill sets as well as help them develop strong relationships with team members. This will help boost self-confidence and self-esteem, as many officers may seem confident and self-reliant but many can doubt their ability, feel overwhelmed but not share this openly given the pressures of the role.

**Training and development can provide sabbatical officers with the necessary skills, knowledge and support to effectively manage and mitigate stress.**

## Self-Audit Questions:

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

- 1 How well equipped do you feel sabbatical officers are in dealing with stress, burnout and compassion fatigue?
- 2 To what extent do you feel your organisation provides training and development opportunities that focus on managing stress and burnout?
- 3 How effective do you believe the training and development programmes are in reducing the risk of sabbatical officer burnout?
- 4 To what extent does your organisation provide regular support and supervision for sabbs in dealing with their emotional and mental wellbeing?
- 5 To what extent do you think your organisation provides regular training and support for sabbaticals in developing healthy coping strategies and self-care practices?
- 6 To what extent do you feel your organisation is proactive in addressing wellbeing concerns among the sabbs?
- 7 To what extent is the training and development provided to officers relevant and tailored to their roles?
- 8 To what extent do you feel that your organisation is committed to creating a positive and supportive workplace culture for sabbatical officers?

# Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are crucial components in supporting the wellbeing and success of sabbatical officers. It is important for organisations representing students to encourage and support their sabbs to prioritise this support. By having access to a designated mentor or coach (often, a blended approach is needed), sabbs can receive guidance and much needed support to help them navigate their role, address challenges and make the most of their term in office. This can play a critical role in preventing burnout and ensuring that sabbatical officers are able to perform at their best.

Union staff can encourage and support sabbs to make time for coaching and mentoring by incorporating it into their organisational culture. It is advisable to have this available both internally and externally. Effective coaching and mentoring can help sabbs develop the necessary skills and knowledge to perform effectively, while also offering a safe and confidential space to seek advice and benefit from reflective practice. This can help sabbatical officers to stay on track, keep motivated, and avoid the negative effects of burnout. It also provides a complementary reflective space to embed learning developed from training (before it is forgotten!)

Research has shown that coaching and mentoring can have a positive impact on staff wellbeing. A study published in the Journal of Business and Psychology found that coaching interventions can lead to significant improvements in employee wellbeing, including reduced stress and increased job satisfaction. (Pecher, Bluckert, & Zacher, 2017). Another study, published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, found that mentoring relationships can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and reduced levels of stress (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, Simon & Griffeth, 2003.)

## Self-Audit Questions:

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

1

How well does your organisation ensure that each sabbatical officer has access to a designated mentor/coach?

2

How effective do you feel your organisation's approach for coaching/mentoring is in supporting sabbatical officers to navigate their role?

3

To what extent does your organisation provide regular check-ins and feedback to sabbatical officers to help them stay on track?

4

How supportive is the organisational culture in promoting one taking time to access support and engage in reflective practice?

5

How effective are the mentoring and/or coaching opportunities in providing external support, as well as internal?

6

How far is the content of training and development incorporated into mentoring and/or coaching to embed learning?

# Encouraging and supporting creative conflict

Encouraging creative conflict is another key aspect of promoting the wellbeing of sabbatical officers. Avoiding conflict, though very appealing, is often not the solution and instead conflict should be approached with empathy and professionalism. Teams are composed of individuals with, hopefully, diverse perspectives and it is unrealistic to expect them to agree all of the time. The same applies to sabbatical officer teams. Navigating conflict effectively and efficiently can lead to improved communication and collaboration, and ultimately better decision making and relationships.

Union staff can play a crucial role in helping sabbatical officers navigate conflict. They can provide the necessary resources and training to equip the officers with the skills needed to handle conflict in a professional manner. This can include workshops, training and coaching that focus on active listening, empathy and effective communication. This can help conflict be approached with a positive attitude, leading to better outcomes and helping the wellbeing of officers overall.

**Avoiding conflict, though very appealing, is often not the solution and instead conflict should be approached with empathy and professionalism.**

## Self-Audit Questions:

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

- 1** How well does your organisation provide sabbatical officers with training and support to manage creative conflict effectively?
- 2** How effectively does the organisation foster a culture that encourages creative conflict and allows for healthy disagreement?
- 3** How well is conflict amongst staff members and sabbs facilitated to a healthy resolution?
- 4** How well is the organisation ensuring that sabbatical officers have the resources to manage conflict effectively?
- 5** How frequently does your organisation provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to seek advice and support in resolving conflict?
- 6** How well does your organisation manage competing demands and prioritise conflicting interests to prevent unnecessary and unhelpful conflict?
- 7** How supportive is the organisational culture in promoting effective management of creative conflict?
- 8** How effectively does your organisation encourage open communication and active listening among sabbatical officers to prevent conflict from escalating and becoming toxic?
- 9** How would you rate the organisation in how effective they provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to collaborate and work together to find mutually beneficial solutions and joint projects?
- 10** How effective is the organisation at providing opportunities to collaborate and work with relevant staff members to find common ground and shared projects?



# Promoting a healthy work/life balance

Having a healthy work-life balance is crucial for preventing burnout and promoting positive wellbeing among staff, particularly sabbatical officer positions which can, at times, be demanding and stressful. A study by the World Health Organisation has shown that burnout is becoming an increasing issue among employees, leading to decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism and decreased productivity. Maintaining a healthy work/life balance can help alleviate these symptoms and promote overall mental and emotional wellbeing.

In order to promote a healthy work-life balance, it is absolutely crucial for organisations to provide support to their people to manage their workloads, prioritise self-care, and make time for hobbies and interests outside of work. This can include implementing flexible work schedules, offering resources for stress management and encouraging a culture that promotes rest and self-care. Additionally, ORS staff can provide support by regularly checking in with sabbatical officers, promoting a healthy work environment and helping people find a balance between their professional and personal lives. It's also important that staff and, particularly senior staff, role-model this approach and in doing so, sabbs can feel more empowered and fulfilled in their role whilst avoiding burnout.

**It is absolutely crucial for organisations to provide support to their people to manage their workloads, prioritise self-care, and make time for hobbies and interests outside of work**

## Self-Audit Questions:

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

**1** How well does your ORS encourage sabbatical officers to prioritise their personal health and wellbeing?

**2** How effectively does your organisation promote a healthy work/life balance for sabbatical officers?

**3** To what extent does your organisation provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to take time off work?

**4** To what extent are there enough measures in place to ensure that sabbatical officers are not overburdened with work?

**5** To what extent does your organisation encourage and support sabbatical officers to prioritise self-care and maintain a healthy lifestyle?

**6** How well does your organisation support sabbatical officers in finding balance between their personal and professional lives?

**7** How well does your ORS ensure that sabbatical officers are not required or pressured (directly or indirectly) to work excessive hours?

**8** To what extent are sabbatical officers afforded person-centred and flexible working arrangements?

**9** How effectively does your organisation encourage and support sabbs to maintain a healthy work-life balance during busy periods?

# Appropriate benefits and support

It is crucial for organisations representing students to provide appropriate benefits and support to their employees, including sabbatical officers, to promote their overall wellbeing and prevent burnout. Having access to benefits such as paid time off, stress management resources and healthcare can significantly improve an individual's ability to maintain a healthy work/life balance and manage the demands of their role.

In addition, having a supportive organisational culture that prioritises employee wellbeing can have a positive impact on morale and motivation. This includes regular check-ins and feedback, opportunities for growth and development as well as open communication channels for seeking support.

It's therefore crucial for organisations to assess their current benefits and support offering and make necessary improvements to ensure that their sabbatical officers have access to the support and resources they need to be healthy and successful. Staff members and senior managers supporting sabbs can take steps to promote this by regularly reviewing and updating their benefits and support offer, conducting regular feedback opportunities and encouraging open communications

**Having access to benefits such as paid time off, stress management resources and healthcare can significantly improve an individual's ability to maintain a healthy work/life balance and manage the demands of their role.**

## Self-Audit Questions:

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

- 1** To what extent is a comprehensive benefits package offered to sabbatical officers to support their physical and mental wellbeing?
- 2** How accessible are the support resources and services provided to sabbatical officers in times of need?
- 3** How effectively does your organisation provide support and resources to help sabbatical officers manage stress and burnout?
- 4** How well does your organisation ensure that sabbatical officers are able to access flexible work arrangements to help balance their workload?
- 5** To what extent does your organisation provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to engage in personal development and growth opportunities?
- 6** To what extent does your organisation offer sabbatical officers access to professional development opportunities to help them grow in their role?
- 7** How effective is the organisation in providing sabbatical officers with access to support services for financial or personal issues?
- 8** How effective is the organisation in providing sabbatical officers with access to mental health support and resources?

# A note here on officer pay

Sometimes a controversial topic in our movement but worth mentioning is sabbatical officer pay. The low pay that sabbatical officers often receive could be a source of stress and burnout, as they are required to take on a demanding role with little financial reward. These roles have evolved and grown so much that to still view sabbatical pay as a glorified stipend is outdated, unfair and dangerous. In order to support the wellbeing of sabbatical officers and prevent burnout, it is important to provide them with appropriate compensation. This could include a fair salary, benefits, or other forms of financial support that can help reduce the financial burden they face while performing their role. It can also support work/life balance, fund appropriate accommodation costs and provide further financial relief.

Providing sabbatical officers with a fair compensation package can help to ensure that they are able to focus on their role and responsibilities without worrying about their finances or taking on additional employment. This can lead to improved job satisfaction, reduced stress, and a greater sense of wellbeing. It also sends a message that their work is valued and appreciated, which can be a powerful motivator. By prioritising the financial wellbeing of sabbatical officers, organisations that represent students can demonstrate a commitment to promoting healthy work-life balance and supporting the overall wellbeing of their people.

**Providing sabbatical officers with a fair compensation package can help to ensure that they are able to focus on their role and responsibilities without worrying about their finances or taking on additional employment.**

# A coordinated and holistic approach

Preventing burnout and promoting positive wellbeing among sabbatical officers is critical for the success of a students' union and the individuals themselves. A coordinated and holistic approach is needed to address the complex interplay of physical, emotional, and psychological demands faced by sabbatical officers.

Studies have shown that high stakes roles are at an increased risk of burnout due to the increased responsibilities, workload, and stress levels associated with their roles (Shanafelt et al., 2016). Without proper support, this can lead to decreased job satisfaction, poor mental health, and even resignation from the role. (This study was focussed on physicians)

To prevent burnout and promote wellbeing, it is essential to have an organisation-wide approach that involves all levels of the organisation, including senior leadership, support staff, and the sabbatical officers themselves. Additionally, involving sabbatical officers in decision-making processes and giving them a voice in shaping their working conditions can also contribute to their wellbeing by fostering a sense of control and ownership over their work (Shanafelt et al., 2016).

Another crucial issue here is the disconnect between how these roles are promoted and marketed when ORS student voice and communications staff are trying to meet their targets or KPIs for numbers of candidates. If you look at the marketing of these roles during nominations period it reads more like the students are running to be Vice President in an imaginary "University Utopia", rather than an ORS with many ongoing challenges. Of course, staff need to sell the roles, but there is a balance between selling and misleading.

**To prevent burnout and promote wellbeing, it is essential to have an organisation-wide approach that involves all levels of the organisation.**

Overall, a coordinated and holistic approach to preventing burnout and promoting positive wellbeing is essential for the success of the ORS and the wellbeing of its sabbatical team from nominations opening to their last day in office (and perhaps beyond?). By addressing the demands of the role, the organisation can ensure that its sabbatical officers are equipped to lead with energy, motivation, and purpose. If the organisation cannot manage these risks then it is time to question whether these roles are fit for purpose in 2023.

### Self-Audit Questions:

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

- 1 How well do your policies and procedures support a healthy work-life balance for sabbatical officers?
- 2 How much consideration is given to the impact of workload on sabbatical officer wellbeing in decision-making processes?
- 3 How effectively does your organisation involve sabbatical officers in developing and implementing policies related to their wellbeing?
- 4 How well does your organisation foster a supportive and inclusive culture for sabbatical officers?
- 5 How effectively does your organisation communicate the realities of the roles at elections nominations time?
- 6 How well does your organisation address and manage conflict in a manner that promotes sabbatical officer wellbeing?
- 7 How well does your organisation assess and respond to the changing needs of sabbatical officers in terms of support and benefits?

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## Self-Audit Questions continued:

8

How far do officers have a clear understanding of the strategic plan of the organisation and how their role fits into it?

9

How far do officers have/ are officers supported to have clear and measurable objectives?

10

To what extent do your sabbatical officers feel overwhelmed and/or overburdened by their workload?



# Making use of this tool

ORS can use this tool as a starting point for practical discussions and actions to improve sabbatical officer wellbeing within the organisation. If you find yourself saying “we do this in the summer/officer training” but not much else that, within itself would be a flag, perhaps you’re putting too much focus on summer training and not embedding these concepts all the way through a sabbatical officers’ term.

A good suggestion is to look at the questions and try to list everything that your ORS currently does to meet the requirements of that question, then to ask yourselves “what could we do to improve?”. This will form a great springboard for further discussion and the makings of an action plan.

How you use this toolkit will depend on how seriously your organisation takes the issues being discussed.

A **serious ORS** would take the tool and ask all impacted stakeholders to complete the questions. To make the most of the toolkit, it's recommended that sabbatical officers, staff, and senior managers all answer the questions and then engage in an open and honest discussion on the results. Comparing the results can give insight into any similarities or differences in perspectives, which can then be addressed through effective communication and collaboration. This process should be part of a wider, whole-organisation approach to improving wellbeing, and everyone has a personal responsibility to take care of their own wellbeing in addition to supporting others.

A **semi-serious ORS** would call a big meeting and have everyone involved complete the questions as a collective, because who has the time, right? That could also be a good approach to take, but this would only be recommended in those ORS that can have open, honest and caring discussions - otherwise this could be inaccessible for those that are struggling.

A **tick-boxing ORS** would delegate the task to one or two people and then report the findings back at a boring meeting where very few people would question or challenge. **Don't be a tick-boxing ORS.**

In all seriousness, if your ORS could do with some support in navigating this tool, please feel free to get in contact with us - [hey@alchemy.org.uk](mailto:hey@alchemy.org.uk)

# The scores on the doors

## Here are what your scores mean:

**216-250:** This score indicates that the ORS is effectively managing the risks to sabbatical officer wellbeing. The ORS should maintain its focus on wellbeing, recognising that burnout and mental health difficulties can arise at any time, and continue to monitor the situation and make necessary adjustments.

**168-215:** This score suggests that the ORS is making progress in managing the risks to sabbatical officer wellbeing, but there is still room for improvement. The ORS should continue to focus on areas of improvement and implement additional strategies to better support the wellbeing of its sabbatical officers.

**120-167:** This score indicates that the ORS needs to make substantial improvements in managing the risks to sabbatical officer wellbeing. The ORS should prioritise its efforts in this area and work to implement evidence-based practices and resources to better support its sabbatical officers.

**0-119:** This score suggests that the ORS is not effectively managing the risks to sabbatical officer wellbeing. The ORS should take immediate action to assess and address the root causes of burnout and stress, and work to create a supportive environment for its sabbatical officers.

Overall, the score bandings provide a snapshot of the ORS's progress in managing the risks to sabbatical officer wellbeing and highlight areas for improvement. The ORS should use the results of the self-audit tool as a starting point for ongoing monitoring and improvement efforts, and seek guidance and support as needed.

# Self-Audit Questions

*On a scale of 1-5 (with one being the most negative and five being the most positive)*

## Training and development

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
1	How well equipped do you feel sabbatical officers are in dealing with stress, burnout and compassion fatigue?	
2	To what extent do you feel your organisation provides training and development opportunities that focus on managing stress and burnout?	
3	How effective do you believe the training and development programmes are in reducing the risk of sabbatical officer burnout?	
4	To what extent does your organisation provide regular support and supervision for sabbs in dealing with their emotional and mental wellbeing?	
5	To what extent do you think your organisation provides regular training and support for sabbaticals in developing healthy coping strategies and self-care practices?	
6	To what extent do you feel your organisation is proactive in addressing wellbeing concerns among the sabbs?	
7	To what extent is the training and development provided to officers relevant and tailored to their roles?	
8	To what extent do you feel that your organisation is committed to creating a positive and supportive workplace culture for sabbatical officers?	

## Mentoring and Coaching

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
9	How well does your organisation ensure that each sabbatical officer has access to a designated mentor/coach?	
10	How effective do you feel your organisation's approach for coaching/mentoring is in supporting sabbatical officers to navigate their role?	
11	To what extent does your organisation provide regular check-ins and feedback to sabbatical officers to help them stay on track?	
12	How supportive is the organisational culture in promoting one taking time to access support and engage in reflective practice?	
13	How effective are the mentoring and/or coaching opportunities in providing internal support, as well as external?	
14	How far is the content of training and development incorporated into mentoring and/or coaching to embed learning?	

## Encouragement of creative conflict

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
15	How well does your organisation provide sabbatical officers with training and support to manage creative conflict effectively?	
16	How effectively does the organisation foster a culture that encourages creative conflict and allows for healthy disagreement?	
17	How well is conflict amongst staff members and sabbs facilitated to a healthy resolution?	

## Encouragement of creative conflict continued

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
18	How well are the organisation ensuring that sabbatical officers can take time and have the resources to manage conflict effectively?	
19	How frequently does your organisation provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to seek advice and support in resolving conflict?	
20	How well does your organisation manage competing demands and prioritise conflicting interests to prevent unnecessary and unhelpful conflict?	
21	How supportive is the organisational culture in promoting effective management of creative conflict?	
22	How effectively does your organisation encourage open communication and active listening among sabbatical officers to prevent conflict from escalating and becoming toxic?	
23	How would you rate the organisation in how effective they provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to collaborate and work together to find mutually beneficial solutions and joint projects?	
24	How effective is the organisation at providing opportunities to collaborate and work with relevant staff members to find common ground and shared projects?	

## Promotion of a healthy work-life balance

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
25	How well does your ORS encourage sabbatical officers to prioritise their personal health and wellbeing?	
26	How effectively does your organisation promote a healthy work/life balance for sabbatical officers?	
27	To what extent does your organisation provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to take time off work?	
28	To what extent are there enough measures in place to ensure that sabbatical officers are not overburdened with work?	
29	To what extent does your organisation encourage and support sabbatical officers to prioritise self-care and maintain a healthy lifestyle?	
30	How well does your organisation support sabbatical officers in finding balance between their personal and professional lives?	
31	How well does your ORS ensure that sabbatical officers are not required or pressured (directly or indirectly) to work excessive hours?	
32	To what extent are sabbatical officers afforded person-centred and flexible working arrangements?	
33	How would you rate the organisation in how effective they provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to collaborate and work together to find mutually beneficial solutions and joint projects?	
34	How effectively does your organisation encourage and support sabbs to maintain a healthy work-life balance during busy periods?	

## Appropriate benefits and support

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
35	To what extent is a comprehensive benefits package offered to sabbatical officers to support their physical and mental wellbeing?	
36	How effectively does your organisation provide support and resources to help sabbatical officers manage stress and burnout?	
37	How well does your organisation ensure that sabbatical officers are able to access flexible work arrangements to help balance their workload?	
38	To what extent does your organisation provide opportunities for sabbatical officers to engage in personal development and growth opportunities?	
39	To what extent does your organisation offer sabbatical officers access to professional development opportunities to help them grow in their role?	
40	How effective is the organisation in providing sabbatical officers with access to support services for financial or personal issues?	
41	How effective is the organisation in providing sabbatical officers with access to mental health support and resources?	

## A coordinated and holistic approach

No.	Question	Score (1-5)
42	How well do your policies and procedures support a healthy work-life balance for sabbatical officers?	
43	How much consideration is given to the impact of workload on sabbatical officer wellbeing in decision-making processes?	
44	How effectively does your organisation involve sabbatical officers in developing and implementing policies related to their wellbeing?	
45	How well does your organisation foster a supportive and inclusive culture for sabbatical officers?	
46	How effectively does your organisation communicate the realities of the roles at elections nominations time?	
47	How well does your organisation address and manage conflict in a manner that promotes sabbatical officer wellbeing?	
48	How far do officers have a clear understanding of the strategic plan of the organisation and how their role fits into it?	
49	How far do officers have/ are officers supported to have clear and measurable objectives?	
50	To what extent do your sabbatical officers feel overwhelmed and/or overburdened by their workload?	

**Total  
Score:**



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