



BAMBA

MINDFULNESS IN THE WORKPLACE
QUALITY ASSESSMENT

HSBC APPLICATION REPORT



www.bamba.org.uk



Applicant

HSBC

Workplace Review Team Members

Andrew McNeill, Sophie Sansom,
Jem Shackleford

Workplace Decision Panel

Andrew McNeill, Jem Shackleford,
Kristine Mackenzie-Janson,
Sharon Hadley, Susan Whitehead,
Miia Chambers

Process

BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Model agreed by the BAMBA Decision Panel in Dec 2022

Chronology

01-08-22 – HSBC submitted their evidence in support of their application for the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process.



Panel considered the evidence provided.

13-10-22 – Panel met to discuss evidence and asked for additional evidence regarding the programme, delivery methods and training of individuals involved.

18-10-22 – Panel asked for clarifications and additional evidence from HSBC.

25-10-22 – Additional evidence provided to the Panel by HSBC.



Workplace Review Team considered additional evidence.

14-11-22 – Second meeting of the Panel to discuss additional evidence and agree on findings/recommendation.

02-12-22 – Workplace Decision Panel meeting held.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Workplace Review Team and Panel have robustly considered the evidence provided by HSBC against the criteria set out in the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process; which refers to the guidance set out in the paper “What defines mindfulness-based programs? The warp and the weft” R. Crane et al, 2016. The completion of this process included the request for and consideration of additional materials from HSBC.

The BAMBA team were unanimously impressed with the evidence that HSBC have provided and the mindfulness approach that they are implementing within their organisation. Furthermore, they wanted to express their appreciation for the thoroughness of the approach being taken by the leaders of the HSBC programme and way that they are working to embed mindfulness within HSBC.

The BAMBA team found that the HSBC approaches to mindfulness fully met criteria set by the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process and wholeheartedly recommend that HSBC are offered the 'BAMBA Quality Assessed Mindfulness' mark.





Recommendations

In keeping with the agreed BAMBA process and to encourage ongoing development the BAMBA Panel has two recommendations for HSBC:

1. The documentation describes the requirements for supervisors of the internal mindfulness courses; but did not explicitly state that supervision/mentoring should be mindfulness-based. We recommend that should be addressed and that supervisors should be required to give mindfulness-based supervision/mentoring, in line with BAMBA Good Practice Guidelines: <https://bamba.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/GPG-for-Supervisors-of-Mindfulness-Based-Teachers-BAMBA.pdf>
2. The BAMBA Panel acknowledged the constraints HSBC has faced regarding travel for business during the Covid period, however, as these restrictions are lifted, Programmes' Leader Champions should be offered and required to take part in retreats in-line with BAMBA Good Practice Guidelines. Furthermore, the Panel would invite HSBC to consider on-line retreats which would be compliant with BAMBA Good Practice Guidelines.

Additionally, the Panel would like to advise HSBC that an MBI:TAC pathway is now available for those supervising teachers. Whilst this approach is very new and has not been added to BAMBA Good Practice Guidelines yet, this is may be something HSBC wish to consider going forward.

It should be noted that BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment for HSBC would not confer BAMBA Teacher listing status. This Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process recognises the approaches as a whole as meeting the standards set for required quality considerations when delivering mindfulness.





Evidence Considered

The Panel considered over 130 pages of evidence and considered answers to 36 questions asking for clarification or additional evidence to demonstrate whether HSBC's mindfulness approaches met the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process requirements.



BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process

The BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process, as agreed by the BAMBA Board in 2022, has 5 competences: EDI, Ethics, Curriculum/Approach, Teachers Competence and Sustainability.

The standards required for each competence to be met are set out in the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process 2022 v4.0 document. The evidence required to illustrate these competencies were intentionally designed to be flexible, to allow the process to be accessible and inclusive for a full range of organisations from small local charities with limited or no funding, to large well-funded multinational organisations – in a range of settings. This approach was essential to recognise the diversity of workplaces.

The expectations for the evidence that could be provided by a large well-funded organisation like HSBC were high. In each competence the Panel unanimously found that the HSBC provided ample evidence that they had met the standards set out in the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process.

The process contains 'Red-Lines' for each competency which are used to illustrate the type of activity that BAMBA felt would be unacceptable in a workplace mindfulness offering. It was agreed that if activities or approaches by an applicant crossed any of these Red Lines an applicant would be unsuccessful. The Panel found that no Red Lines had been crossed and the Panel had no concerns about the design or implementation of the HSBC approach. They did however make two recommendations for the ongoing improvement and development of the mindfulness approaches within HSBC, in keeping with the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process.

The Panel will not attempt to recreate the considerable amount of evidence that was produced by HSBC, rather, in the Report we now provide examples of some of the considerations and key elements of the mindfulness approaches that demonstrated to the Panel that HSBC's application had met the standards set in the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process.



The HSBC Mindfulness-Based Approach: Background

The HSBC mindfulness approaches are well established and have been running for 11 years. Their approaches were initiated by mindfulness practitioners and built up to a point where it has been able to secure senior level (Board Level) sponsorship, within HSBC. HSBC is a multi-national organisation, and the mindfulness approaches are now active in a number of countries and cultures.

There is a pathway along which HSBC Mindfulness Champions can progress. This pathway takes individuals from being Promoters, Facilitators, Leaders and will eventually lead to some individuals becoming Principles (though none have completed the final stage at the time of writing this report).

The HSBC foundation course was initially conducted by external trainers (qualified to MBSR/MBCT trainer level).

The BAMBA Panel particularly enquired with HSBC the level of training and assessment for Champions and were impressed when were informed that: **“Champions are assessed against the MBI:TAC core competencies for warp elements. For weft there is space within their level of Champion to adapt how they relay mindfulness-related resource depending on the audience demographics BUT within the standard principles of the programme i.e. “keeping it secular, inclusive specific to mindfulness”**

The core foundation course design has also been informed by the Mindfulness Initiatives’ ‘Field Book for Mindfulness Innovators’ 2019.

The core foundation course uses a community approach to support its participants and the sustainability of the course, with participants required to maintain continuous development and learning (CDL) and Leader Champions are expected to have mentoring/supervision, which is currently provided by the external training provider.

The origins of the HSBC approach for review are described in this extract taken from the applicant evidence pack:

“The Mindfulness initiative at HSBC, started as a grassroots movement with one person, doing a session every lunch hour in 2011. Over the course of the last 10 years, this grassroots initiative has grown into a significant movement across HSBC, and has been found to resonate across various cultures, and countries for the scientific and non-religious embedding of Mindful approaches in the workplace.

This program has been Globally sponsored by the Group COO since Jan 2021 - to focus on building sustainable employee-led mindfulness communities across HSBC’s Global footprint.” - HSBC Evidence Pack



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

“EDI – not a separate element it is at the core and runs through all the elements for which BAMBA needs to see evidence for recognition” - BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process.

The Panel felt the evidence showed EDI is very much at the core of the HSBC’s mindfulness approaches and rather like BAMBA’s model, EDI was shown to run through all the elements of their mindfulness.

The HSBC’s mindfulness initiatives are active in multiple countries and cultures and HSBC was very clear that they see this as supporting an inclusive approach. The Panel saw internal marketing materials that talked actively about accessibility **“We are inclusive to all”** - HSBC Evidence Pack.

The Panel questioned about how the HSBC mindfulness approaches ensure inclusivity and were advised:

“Inclusion runs throughout the programme and is the central tenet of the secular but adaptable approach we have. We cover specifics of Unconscious bias, importance of Cognitive diversity in avoidance of Group Think and harnessing collective intelligence in Module 6”.

As a very practical illustration of the approach, the Panel saw representations of different ethnic groups in the marketing materials

The Panel were also shown HSBC’s Programme’s ‘Guiding Principles’ document which set out 5 ‘Values Lenses’. These included: Impact Driven, Sustainable, Inclusive Coherent, Safe

Examples of course hand-outs that were seen by the Panel, provided further evidence that mindfulness in HSBC is designed with the intention to be inclusive.

HSBC included reference to trauma sensitivity and the documentation reinforced the importance of Safeguarding.

The Panel explored further with HSBC whether their mindfulness approaches were at risk of excluding people who did not want to explore or practice mindfulness and we were advised that mindfulness was always presented as being a practice that should be voluntarily entered into and experience of mindfulness was not a pre-requisite to career advancement.



Ethics

“Two elements to BAMBA’s consideration of ethics:

- **What is the intention behind the use of mindfulness?**
- **Does the organisation behave ethically?” - BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process**

When the BAMBA Board signed off the Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process they agreed that whilst it would not be possible for BAMBA to judge the ethical nature of all the behaviours exhibited by an organisation, there were certain pieces of evidence that would indicate an organisation’s intent to behave ethically. For large organisations, this could include policy documents like an anti-modern slavery policy, EDI policies and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) policy. HSBC provided evidence that all these are in place within HSBC. <https://www.hsbc.com/who-we-are/esg-and-responsible-business>

With regard to the mindfulness approaches, the Panel saw evidence that they had been designed to actively mitigate the risk of the misappropriation of mindfulness. The Programme Documentation provided explicitly calls out this risk and the safeguards that it has put in place:

“A key priority for the programme has been to protect our colleagues and in turn HSBC in bringing mindfulness into the workplace. There have been an increasing number of critical voices on the ‘misappropriation of mindfulness for corporate ends’ as mindfulness has gained popularity as a solution for addressing wellbeing challenges many workplaces increasingly face. In order to ensure HSBC is safely guided in bringing mindfulness into the workplace a number of ‘guiding Principles’ were created in the early stages of the network and have been refined as the programme has formalized.”

HSBC shared with the Panel the “Mindfulness@HSBC Charter” which sets out “...guiding principles and ethics”. The Panel were struck by the fact that this Charter had been in place since 2014 and had been ratified through HSBC’s D&I governance:

“The charter provides the guiding statements on which the Mindfulness@HSBC initiative was formed and is central to underpinning the network and program values, guiding principles and ethics. The Charter was first ratified under the TOR for the creation of a formal Mindfulness Employee Resource Group (ERG) under HSBC’s D&I governance in 2014 and relaunched with formal program funding in the UK in 2017.”

The Panel were also struck by the use of language in the Charter, for example:

- **“Adopt a positive and enabling attitude to fellow HSBC colleagues as they may choose to learn more about Mindfulness techniques.”**
- **“Provide non-judgemental support and signposting not counselling or therapy. Where relevant direct colleagues experiencing mental health issues to appropriate internal EAP pathways within HSBC.”**



Curriculum Approach

“Proximity to existing recognised approaches may reduce the amount of evidence that is required, this could include reliance upon elements of established MBAs – the reason for this is the amount of research that is available already to demonstrate the safety and effectiveness of these programs” - BAMBA Workplace Programme Recognition Model

HSBC demonstrated both a close alignment to ‘established MBAs’ design and content including reference to the paper “What defines mindfulness-based programs? The warp and the weft” R. Crane et al, 2016, in their mindfulness design. Nonetheless HSBC shared detailed and comprehensive evidence of programme design, content of training sessions, how relevant neuroscience evidence was taught, what was included in guided practices, duration of sessions, numbers for sessions and the balance between didactic and experiential teaching.

The Panel looked closely at the content of each stage of the programme, including having sight of participant and training materials. The Panel were highly satisfied that the curriculum being taught was mindfulness-based and that it conveyed mindfulness in a way that would meet the criteria of the paper “What defines mindfulness-based programs? The warp and the weft” R. Crane et al, 2016.

The practices that were led and taught were very familiar to the Panel and would be found in most established MBA as was the pathway, building up the participants understanding and experience of mindfulness. The elements of neuroscience that were taught were also very similar to those often found in established MBAs.

As the HSBC pathway progressed to enable individuals to lead practices and eventually the delivery of the foundation course, the Panel were satisfied that the content for those being taught and the way the knowledge and understanding was being shared, was appropriate to enable the Champion to deliver the mindfulness activities that were expected of them. The Panel’s confidence was bolstered by the fact that Leader Champions were assessed against the MBI:TAC by external assessors. One advisory comment to HSBC is that they may wish to encourage their assessors to complete the MBI:TAC assessor’s pathway. It was noted however that this has very recently been released by BAMBA.

The Panel reviewed the Champions Skills Assessment criteria which gave very clear assessment values and the Panel also saw HSBC’s External Trainer Qualification Requirements which were exemplary.

The Panel noted that Leaders Champions were not required to attend retreats and when asked this was due to travel restrictions imposed by HSBC during the Covid-19 pandemic. This gave rise to the Panel’s first recommendation that HSBC should require retreats to be taken by Leader Champions (particularly as restrictions are lifted) and to consider on-line retreats.



Competence

“Teachers - of programs need to have experience/qualifications equivalent to BAMBA listing with experience in the area in which they are teaching e.g. capacity to use accessible language.

Champions – people who go on to lead practices cannot just have done the original training, they need to achieve a competence level in holding practices”

- BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process

The whole 'Mindfulness at Work Champions Programme' is carefully structured to provide different levels of training as people move through the programme and appropriate levels of responsibility for leading practices etc. commensurate with the level of experience of the participant.

All participants in the HSBC programme are described as Champions. Initially Champions complete a training which is very similar to 'established MBAs'. The Panel saw the curriculum and content of each session and tested the number of, and length of teaching session, core content including the practices that are guided and the teaching method (balance between didactic and experiential) and were satisfied that the curriculum met the standards required for each level of Champion training.

The Panel were also particularly keen to review and test the training required to achieve Champion Leader standing and were satisfied that the training required was of a suitable standard to meet BAMBA Good Practice Guidelines/MBI:TAC. The Champion Leader training is provided by external training providers who are trained to BAMBA recognised MBCT/MBSR trainer standard. Champion Leaders are also required to have regular supervision and maintain CDL. The supervision was provided by the external training providers. The second and final recommendation from the Panel is that the supervisors should be explicitly required to provide 'mindfulness-based' supervision or mentoring.

Above all though, the Panel were impressed by the application by HSBC of current best practice including the application of MBI:TAC: “Specifically, the Mindfulness at Work Champions training programme covers the specifics of the guidelines by adhering to the competencies (drawn from MBI:TAC workplace Addendum 1) as detailed below. Each Champion must demonstrate key ‘warp’ skills during their training before being awarded the related Champion status.”



Competence

There are 5 levels of Champions; each level is only allowed to lead mindfulness sessions that are commensurate with their training.

- **Promoter** – Participate, Promote and assist during Mindfulness Sessions
- **Facilitator** – Delivers Guided Practice Sessions
- **Facilitator Plus** – Delivers Introductory Talks on Mindfulness and Related Topics and buddies with Facilitator and Promoter Champions
- **Leader** – Delivers the 'Mindfulness at Work Champions Programme' and coaches Facilitator Plus, Facilitator Champions and leads Mindfulness Hubs
- **Principal** – Delivers the 'Mindfulness at Work Champions Programme' and coaches/supervises and mentors other Champions (No HSBC Champions have reached this stage yet)

Again, the Panel were satisfied that these levels and the responsibilities allowed for each stage were commensurate to the training that had been received by each level of Champion. Furthermore, the Panel were satisfied that HSBC was applying sufficient rigor to ensure that Champions were delivering activities appropriate to their training.



Sustainability

“Sustainability can be achieved in different ways appropriate to the culture of the workplace; but the organisation will need to demonstrate that the Programme will be sustained and is not dependent solely on one individual” - BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process

As has already been stated, HSBC’s approaches are well established and active in several countries. Mindfulness at HSBC is in essence a combination of grass-roots development and senior level sponsorship. It has led to an offering which is not ‘top-down’ (for example imposed by the Corporate HR team as part of an executive led initiative) and yet does have the senior level sponsorship required to ensure that it has the backing to continue to grow in a corporate setting.

Whilst the Panel did not consider that a centrally led initiative would prevent HSBC from meeting the standards required by the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process nor would it necessarily be an inappropriate approach; the fact that HSBC’s mindfulness approaches had developed organically from the lived experience of mindfulness practitioners who had then chosen to develop a professional, competencies-based model, supported by external professionals and then built the approaches to a point that they could secure the support of senior colleagues; seemed to be an excellent way for a workplace mindfulness initiative to ensure its sustainability.

On a practical level the Panel were advised that HSBC’s mindfulness currently has a central team which is funded by the organisation and this consists of 4 full time equivalent roles.

The Panel were impressed that HSBC had conducted a risk assessment of the sustainability of the initiatives, which allows it to take mitigating action. The Champion Manager and related responsibilities are the key area identified for Business Continuity risk for Champions in HSBC’s Business Operation system, but this risk is rated to be low.

The overriding mitigation to the risk of programme not being sustained is the continued investment in training more Champions and taking these to Leader and ultimately Principal level. To date HSBC has approximately 140 Champions and has just completed initial training for 10 more leader Champions. Due to the high degree of skill, experience and time-served there is a smaller pool for Principal Champion and currently targeting 2-4 next year however the elapsed time for achieving MBSR / MCBT Teacher level is constraining the pace at which HSBC can populate the Principal Champion roles.

The Panel were satisfied that HSBC has done everything reasonably possible to ensure the sustainability of their mindfulness interventions.



Conclusion

HSBC has been open and transparent with the Panel. They provided a very comprehensive initial evidence pack and when the Panel reviewed and asked for clarifications and additional evidence, HSBC have provided the Panel with all the information for which it has asked. At every stage HSBC has been able to provide evidence to demonstrate that they have met the standards in the BAMBA Mindfulness Quality Assessment Process.

The Panel were particularly impressed by HSBC's adoption of the MBI:TAC approach in what the Panel felt was exemplary. It is not known whether this framework is being used by other workplaces outside the NHS, but this certainly felt like it was an excellent example of what could be done to bring tools that have been developed to support integrity in mindfulness into the corporate workplace.

HSBC's community-based approach, balancing the benefits of grass roots enthusiasm for the need for corporate support, also seemed to the Panel to be an interesting example from which other workplaces may want to learn.

The Panel were also impressed by the way HSBC had put EDI at the heart of the model, starting with the explicit expression of this intent in their Charter through to the examples of training materials that Panel were able to consider.

As BAMBA confirms the Mindfulness Quality Assessment, the Panel feel there is an enormous opportunity for BAMBA help to share some of the best practice that has been established by the HSBC application with other organisations who aspire to build workplace mindfulness initiatives.





Appreciation

The BAMBA Workplace Review Team and Decision Panel are grateful for the full participation and co-operation of HSBC and are impressed by what they have achieved in bringing mindfulness into a corporate workplace setting.

Heartfelt thanks goes out to Mari Thorman for her diligence and persistent care in working towards the successful completion of this application. It became apparent from the answers given and responses to queries that she has been instrumental in establishing a truly ground-breaking workplace mindfulness-based approach within HSBC and we are very grateful for her engagement with the whole process.

Thank you.

