

## Stress Management Policy

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## 1. Policy

- 1.1 The University has a duty of care and a legal responsibility to provide a safe working environment and seeks to maintain a positive and supportive work environment for all staff
- 1.2 The University accepts that stress can impact the physical and mental health of staff, as well as their performance, behaviour and relationships with colleagues and recognises the importance of identifying, preventing, reducing and managing workplace stressors
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to outline how the University will aim to manage stress in the workplace.

## 2. Definition of Stress

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them", and draws a clear distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress, which can occur when pressure becomes excessive.
- 2.2 Stress is a state, not an illness, and where stress lasts for only a short period of time there is usually no lasting effect. However, if the stress is sustained over a longer period it can have a significant impact on physical and mental health, work performance, and morale. Reducing and preventing work-related stress therefore brings clear benefits to the University as well as to staff.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 Organisational responsibilities:

- Promote a healthy work-life balance;
- Provide advice and information to staff about stress to promote preventative measures and ensure early intervention in cases of work-related stress;
- Promote and embrace diversity and inclusion, and provide a workplace free from harassment and bullying;
- Foster a culture of constructive feedback on performance;
- Promote good communication throughout the University;
- Provide information and training to enable staff to develop their skills and maximise their contribution to the success of the University;
- Ensure effective consultation with trade unions on proposed actions relating to the prevention of work-related stress;
- Provide appropriate employee support services.

### 3.2 Managers' responsibilities:

- Ensure good communications, particularly where there are organisational or procedural changes;
- Ensure that jobs are properly designed, with realistic demands and workload, and that expectations and job role are clear;
- Ensure that staff are trained to undertake the demands of their job and can contribute to decisions about how the job is done;
- Ensure that there are regular opportunities to discuss the work and obtain feedback on performance, e.g. regular one-to-one meetings and team meetings;

- Monitor working hours and holidays to ensure that staff are not overworking and are taking appropriate breaks;
- Identify or respond to issues of concern promptly and seek constructive solutions;
- Ensure staff are provided with appropriate training and development opportunities;
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated;
- Be alert to signs of problems and offer additional support to any member of staff who is known to be experiencing stress;
- Seek advice and support at an early stage from HR if difficulties arise.

### 3.3 Employee:

- Seek appropriate advice and support at early stage should difficulties arise;
- Recognise own development needs and responsibility for wellbeing;
- Engage in discussion about their performance and act on feedback;
- Recognise shared responsibility to identify stress in themselves and others at an early stage;
- Utilise the University Employee Assistance service as appropriate assistance;
- As appropriate attend appointments with GP and/or Occupational Health.

## 4. Risk Assessment & Identification

4.1 The Health and Safety Executive have identified 6 key Management Standards<sup>1</sup>. The standards refer to 6 areas of work that can lead to stress if not managed properly. The University has adopted the principles of these in its approach to Stress Risk Assessments:

### HSE Management Standard

Demands	Staff are able to cope with the demands of the job, including workload, work pattern and the work environment
Control	How much say staff have in the way they do their job
Support	The encouragement, support and resources staff receive from the University, managers and colleagues
Relationships	Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

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<sup>1</sup> “What Are the Management Standards?” *HSE*, [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm).

Role

Whether staff understand their role in the organisation and whether the organisation ensures staff do not have conflicting roles

Change

How organisational change is managed and communicated

4.2 The Stress Risk Assessment, is based on the HSE management standards, and is intended to provide managers and staff with guidance on the practical steps they can take to identify and address potential sources of workplace stress. Signs of stress are listed at Appendix 1.

## 5. Managing individual cases of stress

5.1 Where a work-related problem is identified while the staff member is at work, early intervention and action will reduce the likelihood of the individual becoming ill and needing to take sick leave and will increase the likelihood of a successful outcome for both the individual and the department.

5.2 If a member of staff is thought to be suffering from stress or at risk of stress, the line manager should arrange to meet the person to discuss the issues on a confidential basis with a view to identifying and addressing the causes of workplace stress. The Stress Risk Assessment will provide a framework for such meetings.

5.3 At the meeting that manager should:

- Provide a supportive and confidential environment in which the staff member feels able to discuss problems and worries;
- Work through the Stress Risk Assessment with the staff member and identify in discussion the source/s of stress;
- Agree a plan of action both to relieve stress points in the short term e.g. by providing additional support/training and to address the underlying causes in the longer term;
- Where appropriate assist the staff member to develop more effective coping strategies e.g. through training, or use of the resources available from the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Assess the impact of any proposed arrangements on other staff to ensure that they are not themselves subjected to undue stress as a consequence;
- Monitor and review the situation regularly with the individual and adjust the action plan as required.

## 6. Sources of Support and Information

6.1 The University has a range of support and resources that staff and managers can access:

- [Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [Mental Health First Aiders](#)
- [Staff Networks](#)
- [Wellbeing resources](#)

- [Health Cash Plan](#)
- [Onsite Fitness and Wellness activities](#)
- [SMILE](#) access a range of wellbeing courses on the University learning management system

#### 6.2 External sources of support and information:

- [NHS](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [Mental Health Matters](#)
- [Samaritans](#)

#### Relevant Policy Headings

- **Date Written:** June 2024
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- **Impact Assessment date:** TBC
- **History (where discussed / who circulated to / committees considered:** Trade Unions / Health and Safety Committee

## Appendix 1

### Recognising signs of stress

The stress response occurs when the actual or perceived pressures on an individual are greater than their ability to cope. Where pressure lasts for a short period of time there is usually no lasting effect, however, when the pressure is sustained and or excessive, without an opportunity to recover, this may lead to emotional or physical harm.

It is important that individuals and managers recognise the types of pressures that might contribute to feelings of stress in themselves or others. Pressures might come from issues in personal, home or work life.

Individuals respond to pressure in different ways, being self-aware can help to identify where extra support and development may help in managing the effects of pressure.

Recognition of a problem means that appropriate support can be sought at an early stage, before a negative physical or emotional effect is experienced. Listed below are possible signs of stress that individuals and managers may recognise at an early stage.

Work Performance	Other
Poor concentration Inconsistent performance Uncharacteristic errors Indecisiveness Inability to deal calmly with everyday situations Signs of tiredness, irritability or anxious behaviour making complaints Lapses in memory Lack of holiday planning and taking Working longer or excessive hours	Increased drinking of alcohol and/or coffee Increased smoking Comfort eating Withdrawal Arriving late Leaving early Extended lunches Absenteeism or increased sickness absence Passivity or lack of commitment Aggressive Behaviour Criticism of others Shouting Bullying, harassment

Appendix 2

Stress Risk Assessment

**STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT FORM**

	<b>QUESTIONS TO ASK</b>	<b>YES/NO/NA</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>Demands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you feel you have just the right amount of work to do? (i.e. not too much or not too little)</li></ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have you had sufficient training to do your job?</li></ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there any problems with your work environment that affect your ability to perform your job?</li></ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you feel that you have sufficient skills and knowledge to perform your job?</li></ul>		

<b>Control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you happy with the opportunities for you to voice your opinion?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel as though your opinion is valued?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel included in decision making in the team?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel you are using the skills you have got to full effect?</li> </ul>		
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel that you get enough support from your line manager?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have sufficient resources to do your job?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel you get enough support from colleagues?</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you take the breaks you are entitled to at work?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you familiar with what support is available to you?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel you have a healthy work-life balance?</li> </ul>		
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you affected by any conflict in the team or wider organisation?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel the team works well together?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you been affected by unacceptable behaviour at work?</li> </ul>		
<b>Job</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel that there is any conflict in your role?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you clear about your role and responsibilities at work?</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you understand the responsibility of other jobs in the team?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you made aware of any changes that are happening at work?</li> </ul>		
<b>Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you understand why the change is happening?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you understand the impact on your job of any change?</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel well supported during change at work?</li> </ul>		
	<p>Please insert any relevant information relating to your feelings about stress at work:</p>		

<b>Further Staff Comments</b>	

Note for Manager:

- This questionnaire can be used to support a wellbeing conversation with an individual staff member
- Alternatively you can give this questionnaire out as a survey and collate responses, or if your team is small, use it as a guide for asking questions with them in a team meeting. Do a basic frequency count of yes's and no's from your team members responses.
- Conduct team discussions/ focus groups to explore any areas that seem to be higher risk (i.e. more negative than positive responses to the questions).
- When you have completed the questionnaire, develop an action plan (as attached) with your team or individual to support any areas of concern and review this on a regular basis.

**STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT - ACTION PLAN (Manager to complete with staff member)**

**Risk assessment for:** .....

**Department:** .....

**Manager:** .....

**Date:** .....

<b>Type of Stressor</b>	<b>Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category</b>	<b>Existing workplace precautions already in place</b>	<b>Further action to be taken</b>	<b>Who will ensure the action is done? and Review date</b>
<b>Demands</b>				

<b>Control</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Relationships</b>				

<b>Role</b>				
<b>Change</b>				
<b>Manager's signature:</b>			<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Staff Signature:</b>			<b>Date:</b>	