

University of Glasgow Policy for

Management of Stress in the Workplace

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is this policy about?

This policy sets out the arrangements in place at the University for the minimisation and management of work-related stress.

Who should follow this policy?

All managers and staff should be aware of this policy. However, it is the responsibility of each College, School and service to ensure that their employees are fully conversant in the principles and arrangements highlighted herein.

Who should I contact with any queries about this policy?

Please contact Selina Woolcott, Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Prepared by:

Selina Woolcott, Director Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Ratified by (Group and Date)

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee
9th December 2020
University Court

Effective From:

January 2021

Review Date:

December 2024

Lead Reviewer:

Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Dissemination Arrangements:

- Health, Safety & Wellbeing Website
- SEPS
- Occupational Health
- People and Organisational Development

Section 1	Procedure status3
Section 2	Introduction.....	3
Section 3	Purpose of this Policy	4
Section 4	Definitions.....	4
Section 5	Accountability, Responsibility, and Compliance.....	5
5.1	Principal	5
5.2	Chief Operating Officer/ Secretary of Court (COO).....	5
5.3	Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing.....	5
5.4	Heads of College, Heads of School, Directors of RIs and Heads of Service	5
5.5	Line Managers (whether in Schools, RIs or University Services).....	5
5.6	Health and Safety Representatives.....	6
5.7	Employees	7
Section 6	Procedures	8
6.1.	Risk Assessment	8
Section 7	Information, Instruction and Training	10
7.1	Chaplaincy	10
7.2	Safety & Environmental Protection Services (SEPS).....	10
7.3	Organisational Development (OD).....	10
Section 8	Governance	10
Section 9	Record Keeping.....	11
Section 10	Review of Procedure	11
Appendix 1:	Information on Stress Recognition	12
Appendix 2:	Stress Risk Assessment Guidance.....	14

Section 1 Procedure status

This is a policy that has been prepared to complement the Health and Safety Policy. It is supported by:

- Management of Stress in the Workplace – a Manager’s Guide
- Management of Stress in the Workplace – an Employee’s Guide

Section 2 Introduction

What is work-related stress?

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) defines Work-related Stress as “*the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them*” (see Section 4) However, HSE also makes a clear distinction between stress and pressure, recognising that pressure does not always lead to stress and is often motivational, providing the positive drive to achieve objectives at work.

The impacts of work-related stress

The Universities Safety & Health Association (USHA) published its Guidance for managing Work Related Stress within the Higher Education Sector in September 2020. The guidance refers to recent relevant research and statistics that highlight the impact of work-related stress, some of which are detailed below.

Work-related stress is the primary cause of occupational ill health, accounting for around 57% of all days lost to work-related ill health according to “Work related stress depression or anxiety statistics in Great Britain 2018” the Labour Force Survey. This found that nearly 600,000 workers suffered from these conditions during 2017/2018, equating to 15.4 million lost days and a prevalence of 1,800 per 100,000 workers. It results in decreased productivity and increased human error, with the potential for increased accidents at work. It also causes distress, suffering and, in some extreme cases, morbidity and mortality in the workforce.

The Universities and Colleges Employers’ Association (UCEA) delivered a Higher Education survey in 2018/2019 which indicated there was a small increase in average working days lost (per employee) from 6 days the previous year to 6.2 days in 18/19 across the sector. Poor mental health was cited as the reason for over a quarter of this lost time, and half of the time lost due poor mental health was attributed to stress with nearly a third of this stress being reported to be work-related.

The costs of work-related stress

Costs to the individual due to stress, including work-related stress, are numerous and diverse. Prolonged stress has an impact on both physical and psychological aspects of health, as well as significantly altering behaviour.

Work-related stress contributes significantly to the overall financial costs of sickness absence, which the UCEA survey indicated to have risen from £996 per employee in 17/18 to £1,043 in 18/19.

Other potential costs to the organisation from work-related stress include adverse impacts on the employees’ ability and performance, as well as their motivation and commitment to their work. This can result in increased errors, accidents, turnover and absence which all have the likelihood to negatively impact the student experience and the University’s reputation.

There are also all the usual disadvantages associated with increased sickness absence. These include increased pressure on remaining work colleagues which can damage motivation, productivity and, ultimately, service delivery and quality.

Approach

Effective stress management, combining preventive measures with support for affected staff, can significantly improve an organisation’s performance through improved absence levels, helping it to reach its strategic goals.

The University of Glasgow recognises the important part it must play, as an employer, ensuring that it does all that is reasonably practicable to protect the safety and both the physical and mental health of its employees at work.

This is implicit in the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy. To deal positively with stress in the workplace, we recognise our duties and responsibilities:

- To provide a safe and healthy working environment.
- To ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.
- To keep under review the measures taken to ensure the effective management of the health and safety of employees in relation to stress and those activities that could adversely affect the health and safety, including mental health and wellbeing, of themselves and/or others.

The University values the health and wellbeing, including the mental health and wellbeing, of all employees. We recognise the recommendations made in the USHA Guidance on Managing Work Related Stress within the Higher Education Sector and commit to aligning practice at the University with that outlined in this document.

The USHA guidance promotes a “whole university” holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing, including stress, and draws on the Stevenson-Farmer “Thriving at Work” report 2017, which suggests core mental health standards which should be adopted by institutions:

- Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan.
- Develop mental health awareness among employees.
- Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling.
- Provide your employees with good working conditions.
- Promote effective people management.
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

Section 3 Purpose of this Policy

This policy recognises the value of maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all staff and acknowledges our duty of care with regard to both physical and mental health at work. We are committed to providing a supportive environment that maintains, fosters and actively promotes the health and wellbeing of employees. In order to achieve this, we aim to:

1. Encourage and enable good, emotionally intelligent, leadership and management practices in the University which create a supportive working environment, enabling employees to raise issues, confident that they will be addressed sympathetically, appropriately and in confidence.
2. Recognise that all employees, line managers included, may be placed in stressful situations when dealing with difficult work relationships, including those between peers, and ensure that line managers receive additional help as appropriate to manage stressful situations
3. Ensure staff have the opportunity to experience a good balance between work and their other commitments
4. Ensure effective risk assessment for workplace stress to highlight the key causes of stress within the University of Glasgow and identify potential control measures to reduce stress and optimise systems aimed at minimising risks arising from stress
5. Raise awareness of stress and support staff in building their capacity for coping with pressure and stress and facilitate access to suitable confidential support services.
6. Optimise individual performance and opportunities through supportive performance management systems and effective, sensitive support systems for sickness absence management

Section 4 Definitions

Term	Definition
Stress	<p><i>“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”</i></p> <p>Health & Safety Executive (HSE) HSG218 Managing the causes of work-related stress</p>

Section 5 Accountability, Responsibility, and Compliance

The Principal is responsible overall for the management of Health and Safety. In addition to the responsibilities laid down in the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy, there are further specific duties inherent within this procedure. These are detailed below

5.1 Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for Health, Safety & Wellbeing and ensuring that suitable arrangements are in place for its management and monitoring.

5.2 Chief Operating Officer/ Secretary of Court (COO)

The COO is responsible, through the Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing, for ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place which describe the arrangements for:

- assessing the risk of work-related stress arising out of University of Glasgow work activities.
- recognising and supporting employees who may be experiencing mental ill health, and for supporting their line managers.

Also

The COO will liaise with other members of the Senior Management Group to make the case for securing resources for implementing the arrangements, as necessary.

5.3 Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing

The Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing is responsible for developing, in consultation with other support services as appropriate, suitable policies and procedures which describe the arrangements for:

- assessing the risk of work-related stress arising out of University of Glasgow work activities.
- recognising and supporting employees who may be experiencing mental ill health, and for supporting their line managers.

5.4 Heads of College, Heads of School, Directors of Research Institutes and Heads of Service

- The implementation of this procedure within their College, School, Directorate or Service
- Ensuring that resources (personnel, resources and facilities) are allocated to ensure that legislative requirements for taking reasonably practicable steps towards protecting employees against the effects of work-related stress are satisfied.
- Ensuring that the policies, support services and tools available for employees, in relation to stress management and support, are well and frequently publicised to all employees in their area of responsibility
- Ensuring that if additional resources are required, a request is raised through the appropriate mechanism.

5.5 Line Managers (whether in Schools, Research Institutes or University Services)

Line Managers shall:

- Identify hazardous situations within their areas of responsibility that pose a risk of causing work-related stress in employees, through the process of general risk assessment, considering in turn each of the six factors used in the HSE Indicator Tool:
 - ✓ Demands
 - ✓ Control
 - ✓ Role
 - ✓ Support
 - ✓ Relationships
 - ✓ Change

As well as any other relevant factors they are aware of that could contribute to workplace stress, assessing how likely they each are to play a role in the activity under consideration. For each factor found to be relevant, there is a need to identify suitable mechanisms to either eliminate or control to minimise their impact on employees.

Guidance on the activity risk assessment process and a template Stress Risk Assessment can be found at Appendix 4

- Where stress is identified as a factor in the deterioration of staff morale, well-being or performance levels, give priority to identifying and then working to eliminate the causes of stress and ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that staff are protected from working in a stress-inducing environment
- Include discussions of these situations with their teams and/or individual staff during the course of routine team meetings or one-to-one sessions to enable identification of situations where individual stress risk assessments, such as the one supplied at Appendix 3, or local use of the survey questionnaire at Appendix 2 may be helpful
- Contribute to and/or nominate designated employees to be involved in any more detailed risk assessments that are highlighted as necessary by:
 - Any relevant survey metrics as they relate to the local area
 - An identifiable trend in local sickness absence due to work-related stress
 - An individual or group of individuals raising concerns over work-related stress
 - Occupational Health or another staff support service raising concerns over work-related stress
- Ensure employees with designated roles, such as that of risk assessment, mental health first aid receive any training identified as appropriate, by the University, for this purpose
- Support staff experiencing sickness absence in relation to work-related stress, in line with relevant existing HR policies on absence management
- Develop and review job descriptions and associated person specifications to help facilitate the selection of suitable candidates that meet the full range of skills and competencies necessary to fulfil the role in question

The HSE Management Standards highlight that for employees to feel supported, managers need to be approachable to their staff, encouraging them in their day-to-day work, and supporting those experiencing problems or working in emotionally demanding situations.

The types of support referred to might include any or a number of the following:

- Meeting with staff to discuss what they see to be the causes of their stress to see if changes to work patterns/ loads on a temporary or longer-term basis that could reduce their stress. This might be in the course of a routine return to work interview or a more informal meeting or 'phone call/ video link with someone who is currently off work – contacting someone who is off work with work-related stress should always be conducted under the advice of HR and/or Occupational Health
- Referring the employee to Occupational Health for some advice on how best to manage the person's condition at work and on measures to help reduce stress for the individual
- Making sure, through consultation with HR and the Policy on Managing Attendance, that the employee's absence is managed appropriately and sensitively
- Ensuring the employee is aware of the other support services available (see 6.2) and acting as an intermediary to those services if required
- Making sure the employee is aware of other policies that might be of help – such as those on Leave, Dignity At Work and Study, Flexible Working, Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities, etc.
- Keeping in regular contact with the employee to check on progress and effectiveness of any adjustments that have been made to support them

5.6 Health and Safety Representatives

Trade Union Representatives will represent the interests of all members of staff, meeting their obligations under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations, and will:

- Work in co-operation with the University, and in particular with Health, Safety & Wellbeing, in managing issues relating to work-related stress

Health and Safety Representatives are appointed Trades Union members who have been nominated by their union to represent other union members in matters relating to health and safety in the workplace in accordance with the Safety Representatives and Committees Regulations 1977. At the University, these

Safety Representatives have agreed to also represent non-union members in this role. Accredited Trade Union Representatives are legally entitled to carry out their duties under the relevant legislation with the full assistance of the employer and without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

5.7 Employees

Employees also have duties which are highlighted in the sections below.

5.7.1 Reporting Duties

Employees must report any concerns they may have over the mental wellbeing of themselves, or colleagues, to their line manager or one of the support services made available by the Organisation. Unless this happens, cases of work-related stress may go un-noticed or unrecognised and it may not be possible for the range of available support mechanisms to be put in place to support affected employees.

The Managing Attendance Policy Toolkit has a Notification of Work-Related Stress Form <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/humanresources/all/health/managingattendancepolicy/managingattendance-managertoolkit/>

Should there be specific incidents thought to be related to work-related stress, they should be reported through the available incident reporting and recording systems.

5.7.2 Designated Duties

Some employees may have been designated a specific role(s) under this policy and its procedures, and are required to fulfil this, attending appropriate training as identified. This could include managerial duties, assisting with a local stress risk assessment etc.

5.7.3 Responsibilities towards fellow workers

Health and safety legislation requires us to have regard for the health and safety of fellow employees, and others we come into contact with in the course of our work activities.

The HSE Management Standards highlight that for employees to feel supported by their co-workers, their colleagues need to be approachable to discuss work problems, respectful of the values and feelings of other people, and supportive of each other during difficult periods.

5.7.4 Responsibilities towards themselves, and to cooperate with employers.

The relevant legislation also gives us all, as employees, the duty of care to ourselves whilst at work, in as much as it is within our own control. We also have responsibility to cooperate with our employer to enable them to meet their duties of care towards us.

In practical terms, this includes the reporting duties and designated duties mentioned above, but also requires us to work with the University to control risks in the workplace. With regard to stress, this could include helping with the risk assessment process, attending training courses as requested, as well as contributing to processes developed to help resolve identified issues relating to workplace stress.

These processes could be related to an individual, for example attending appointments at Occupational Health, or meetings with HR or line managers to discuss sickness absence related to stress, in order to identify possible solutions. Wherever it is practical, the University will try to resolve issues within the employee's current role and workplace. Where adjustments to work activities/ patterns/ hours are suggested as a possible way forward, and where the line manager considers that such adjustments can be incorporated into the role in question, then the employee must give these suggested adjustments an opportunity to resolve the stress issue that has been raised.

It is also important to recognise that adjustments suggested by an individual themselves, or by a support service like Occupational Health, just may not be practical, operationally, in the role in question - Line Managers have to consider not only the job that requires to be done but also the impact on other team members if the adjustments are put in place. If the adjustments cannot be accommodated in the role, then the University will consider other options, which may include, where possible, assisting the employee to redeploy to another role, in order to remove the issues that are causing stress. This is simply the University fulfilling its own duties to help reduce stress for an individual, so far as is reasonably practicable. However, this can only be achieved if the employee is willing to engage in the process, give suggested options due consideration and try out suggested alternatives.

If employees choose not to engage with the support mechanisms and resolution processes the University has in place, then the University can only make decisions based on the information available to it. If, for example, an employee chooses not to attend an appointment offered by the Occupational Health Unit, the University may have to take decisions in the absence of health- based information, which could place the

employee at a disadvantage. This could be of particular relevance if the employee is also involved in a procedure under another University policy, such as those on Capability or Competency.

We must also cooperate with processes designed to help the wider workforce, e.g. taking part in discussions and other events aimed at identifying and resolving the causes of stress within our immediate team, School, Service, College etc.

The University wishes to minimise work-related stress – but can only do it with the help of all its employees.

Section 6 Procedures

6.1. Risk Assessment

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess health and safety risks, including stress, and to introduce suitable control measures based on such risk assessment. Priority will be given to assessing the causes of stress at work and introducing measures to reduce or, where reasonably practicable, prevent it

6.1.1. Organisational Risk Assessment

A key component of Organisational Risk assessment will be the use of questions from HSE's Stress Management Standard questionnaire (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/indicatortool.pdf>), as part of the regular staff survey or associated support surveys.

These will be used to identify 'hot spots' where stress is identified as a particular issue within the organisation.

The information arising from the survey will be considered in conjunction with other organisational data, such as absence management statistics and occupational health activity statistics, to give a more detailed and informed picture of the incidence of work-related stress at the University of Glasgow and its causes.

6.1.2. Post Survey actions

The results of the survey element of the risk assessment will be analysed to identify the primary causal factors associated with work-related stress in the particular subject area.

The Directors of Health, Safety & Wellbeing and HR will then work with and advise managers and staff on how to address the significant issues highlighted by the survey results. This will include engaging the assistance of staff support services, as appropriate, to facilitate exploration of and potential resolution to the specific local issues contributing to work-related stress.

Where common themes or trends are identified, the Directors of People & Organisational Development and HS&W will collaborate to advise the Senior Management Group on suitable resolutions to these corporate issues.

6.1.3 Local Risk Assessment

Responsibilities of Line Managers and Supervisors for local risk assessment are highlighted in section 5.5 above. Routine regular staff meetings and one-to-one sessions with employees should be used to discuss ongoing work activities to assess whether they currently have or are likely in the future to have the potential to cause stress.

Individual responsive stress assessment

Individual Stress issues may come to light at any time throughout the year and should be addressed by the Manager at the first appropriate opportunity. The Managing Attendance Policy Toolkit has a Notification of Work-Related Stress Form:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/humanresources/all/health/managingattendancepolicy/managingattendance-managertoolkit/> which employees and managers can use to support dialogue, identify key stressors and develop supportive solutions. Advice on such measures may require to be sought from Occupational Health and/or Human Resources.

In the course of ongoing performance management, the issue of workload and related stress may also come to light. If so, managers should use the opportunity to begin to discuss and address the matter with their member of staff. If an issue is raised during a Performance and Development Review meeting, they may decide to deal with the issue promptly, but separately and outside the formal review process.

Activity proactive stress risk assessment

Where general risk assessments for activities identify that work-related stress is a potential hazard, or where individual reports or sickness absence profiles also indicate a trend in work-related stress illness, then the activity itself should be assessed specifically for work-related stress, using the guidance and risk assessment template provided at **Appendix 2**. The other situation where proactive stress risk assessment is important is when changes at work are being planned that impact on employees, directly or indirectly, in such way that it is foreseeable they could find stressful.

6.2. Staff Support Services

There are a variety of services available to assist and support staff experiencing problems that are stress-related or otherwise impacting on their mental health or wellbeing. Details are given below.

6.2.1. Occupational Health

Occupational Health provides a wide range of services that are available to employees through management referral. These include consultations with the Clinical Occupational Health staff, health surveillance, and referral for psychiatric/ psychological support, delivered by Counselling and Psychological Services Further details are available from the Occupational Health website:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/occupationalhealthunit/contact/about/>

6.2.2 Human Resources

6.2.2.1 Local HR Teams

Local HR Teams provide specialist advice and guidance to line managers and employees on this policy, as well as other relevant policies such as those on the Managing Attendance and Dignity at Work. They assist in supporting individuals who have been off sick with stress and will advise on and monitor return to work plans in conjunction with line management. They will also assist in mediation with difficult working relationships, as well as arranging external mediators where appropriate.

6.2.2.2 Central HR Teams

Central HR Teams oversee the development and review of HR Policy, as well as supporting activity to deliver survey activity amongst colleagues. Surveys are one of the mechanisms used to monitor how we all feel about our experiences of working for the University and provide a key opportunity for staff to let the University know their thoughts on a range of themes relating to the overall employee experience. The more employees that take part, the more reliable and representative the findings are of the University as a whole. This information is then used to help inform organisational plans around developing and supporting staff to reduce workplace stress.

6.2.2.3 Equality & Diversity

The Equality and Diversity Unit, through the Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee, leads the development and review of all policies relevant to equality and the implementation of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty. The EDU supports employees and managers in implementing these policies and procedures across the University including monitoring staff diversity statistics and delivery of equality training.

6.2.3. Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy Service is a non-denominational service, committed to offering support to staff and students and their relatives. Chaplains are available to people of all faiths (and to those of no faith) and can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Chaplaincy Service provides a range of information, training and resources, further details of which are published in the Chaplaincy Service leaflets and on the Chaplaincy Service pages of the website.

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/chaplaincy/>

6.2.4. Engagement Leads

Engagement Leads are an inter-departmental network of staff who work in partnership with local management, the Engagement Working Group and others to support the enhancement of the University's employee experience agenda. The nature of the role varies from person to person and from area to area but can include data analysis, communication, collaboration and action planning activity. They may be involved in local communications around the use of surveys, encouraging engagement with the surveys and supporting feedback of survey results at a local level.

6.2.5. External Support Service Providers

University of Glasgow may appoint, as appropriate, external service providers to assist in the support of staff experiencing stressful situations or mental ill health. This may take the form of, for instance, an externally provided employee assistance programme, including counselling services for employees and will be *strictly confidential* for the user. Contact information for such services can be found under Staff Counselling on the Health, Safety & Wellbeing website. <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/health/>

6.2.6. Safety & Environmental Protection Services (SEPS)

Safety and Environmental Protection Services provide a range of advisory services and information as well as training courses covering a variety of health and safety issues, including risk assessment.

The staff respond to requests for assistance following adverse events to provide support for employees and their managers in dealing with health and safety management issues. SEPS also operate proactively in carrying out inspections and audits of work to make sure that departments have appropriate safety procedures in place. SEPS can provide advice on the legal requirements concerning occupational health and safety at work.

6.2.7. Trades Union Health & Safety Representatives

Trades Union Health & Safety Representatives at the University of Glasgow are here to represent and where necessary advise and support all employees, whether union members or non-union members, on matters relating to health and safety in the workplace. It would naturally, however, be hoped that the majority of issues can be resolved locally through normal management processes in most instances.

Section 7 Information, Instruction and Training

7.1 Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy Service organises a variety of courses including ones on recognising suicidal tendencies and potential interventions. Further information on these can be accessed through contacting the Chaplaincy service or through their website.

7.2 Safety & Environmental Protection Services (SEPS)

SEPS provide and arrange a variety of statutory, mandatory and advisory training. This includes training in health and safety management as well as risk assessment. In addition, SEPS oversees the e-Induction training which includes a module on Stress at Work awareness. For further details contact the service at Pearce Lodge or visit the SEPS section of the Health, Safety & Wellbeing website.

7.3 Organisational Development (OD)

OD interventions develop and improve the culture, strategy and structure of the University, growing organisational capability through alignment of strategy, structure, management processes and people. The team also lead interventions to improve the leadership, people management and personal effectiveness of University staff as individuals.

Section 8 Governance

Policy on the management of stress is consulted on and overseen by the Mental Health Group as well as the University's Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HSW) Committee. The COO is Convenor of both these forums, as well as the University's Champion for Mental Health.

The Mental Health Group acts in the capacity of a steering group to coordinate and promote the University's approach to staff and student mental health and wellbeing. The HSW Committee is a management/ staff/

student/ adviser consultative forum that monitors and advises the University on compliance with relevant legislation.

The content of this procedure is monitored and evaluated through these bodies in order to ensure its continued effectiveness, alignment with best practice in mental health and wellbeing, coordination with other related University Policies and compliance with statutory requirements. This will be done partly through the audit programme delivered by SEPS but primarily through monitoring of sickness absence and occupational health data and regular surveys. The results of these monitoring processes will be submitted to the HSW Committee and Mental Health Group for consideration and review in partnership.

Section 9 Record Keeping

Any risk assessments carried out should be retained for a period of 10 years. Records may be electronic. Information concerning any significant risks identified and staff populations affected must be made available to staff, along with control measures in place to minimise these risks in accordance with the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations and in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

Section 10 Review of Procedure

This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed at least every two years, or in the event of any significant change which impacts on the validity of the document.

What is work-related stress?

Work-related stress is defined as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other demands placed on them’. Work-related stress is not an illness in itself, but if it is prolonged or particularly intense it can lead to physical and/or mental ill health.

Stress is encountered both at work and outside it. Some people cope well, others less well with the same stressors depending on personalities and circumstances. Stressors at home can affect those encountered at work and vice versa.

Pressure is not the same as stress. A certain amount of pressure is stimulating and gives satisfaction. Problems arise when the pressure is too great, goes on for too long or comes from too many directions at once. This leads people to feel that they are losing control, which can lead to stress.

Possible sources of stress in the workplace

Work organisation and conditions:

Continual changes in work	Over promotion
Lack of control over work	Complexity and demands of new work systems
Job insecurity	Low pay or low status
Unclear reporting lines	Lack of facilities for rest breaks
Long work hours	Lone working
Lack of participation in decision making	Excessive workload
Inadequate staffing	Lack of recognition of promotion prospects

Work relationships:

Inconsistent management	Conflicting demands
Lack of support or assistance	Surveillance
Social isolation	Time pressures
Boring or repetitive work	Stakeholder complaints
Under-use of skills	Lack of appropriate training
Poor communication from management	Violence, actual or threatened
Bullying	Uncertainty about responsibilities
Harassment	Responsibility for others

Physical conditions

- Excessive noise
- Poor lighting
- Poor temperature control
- Poor ventilation
- Poor equipment
- Poor workstation design
- Exposure to adverse weather conditions
- Exposure to fumes, chemicals or other unpleasant chemicals

The ability of staff to cope with pressure at work may be determined to a greater or lesser extent by the amount of pressure being experienced outside work, resulting from non-work pressures such as bereavement, family sickness, mental or other inter-personal problems. Although the University will have no control over these areas, we should try and understand the potential resultant impact on staff’s work performance. If managers are aware that a member of staff is experiencing personal difficulties, he/she should encourage the staff member to seek support from the University Staff Counselling Service.

Signs and Symptoms of stress

The first signs that indicate employees may be suffering from excessive pressure or stress are changes in behaviour or appearance. A guide on the kinds of changes that may occur is given below.

Work performance

- declining/inconsistent performance
- uncharacteristic errors
- loss of control over work
- loss of motivation/commitment
- indecision
- lapses in memory
- increased time at work
- lack of holiday planning/usage

Withdrawal

- arriving late to work
- leaving early
- extended lunches
- absenteeism
- resigned attitude
- reduced social contact
- elusiveness/evasiveness

Other behaviour

- out of character behaviour
- difficulty in relaxing
- increased consumption of alcohol
- increased smoking
- lack of interest in appearance/hygiene
- accidents at home or work
- reckless driving
- unnecessary risk taking

Regression

- crying
- arguments
- undue sensitivity
- irritability/moodiness
- over-reaction to problems
- personality clashes
- sulking
- immature behaviour

Aggressive behaviour

- malicious gossip
- criticism of others
- vandalism
- shouting
- bullying or harassment
- poor employee relations
- temper outbursts

Physical signs

- nervous stumbling speech
- sweating
- tiredness/lethargy
- upset stomach/flatulence
- tension headaches
- hand tremor
- rapid weight gain or loss
- constantly feeling cold

General Activity Risk Assessment for Work-Related Stress

Application

The legal requirement to risk assess is a duty under the Management of Health and Safety in the Workplace Regulations and applies to all work activities. Risk assessments should be carried out whenever new work activities are introduced and should be periodically reviewed.

Review

Risk assessments should be reviewed whenever there is a change to any aspect of the work activity which could significantly affect the health, safety or wellbeing of employees; or under any other circumstances where the existing risk assessment is thought to be no longer valid. The regular period of review should be decided locally and will depend on the level of risk and how susceptible to change the activity is.

Hazard Identification - Factors to be considered

When considering the likelihood that a work-activity could result in employees becoming stressed, it is necessary to first identify the potential hazards. The table below includes the factors identified by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as being most significant contributors to workplace stress, and also an eighth factor - external factors that can impact on individual ability to cope with work pressures.

Factor	Considerations
A. Demands	High volume of work, competing priorities, unrealistic deadlines, intense periods of activity, requirement for very fast work, expectation of very long hours, high pressured environment
B. Control	Level of control over pattern of work and breaks, inability to decide on work speed, priorities, access to flexible working
C. Support from Managers and Colleagues	Support from managers in dealing with work difficulties, accessibility, constructive feedback, praise for good work, encouragement Support/ assistance from colleagues in dealing with work difficulties, respect
D. Relationships	Inter-relationships with work colleagues, staff and manager(s); bullying; harassment; conflict; unkind behaviour
E. Role	Clarity and understanding of role itself; how to carry it out; how it relates to immediate team, local school/research institute/ support service and the wider organisation's strategic plans
F. Change	Communication, consultation and management of change.
G. External Factors	Mental health, other serious ill health, bereavement, dependant illness

A. Demands

Consider both the variety and extremes of demands placed on employees involved in the work activity. Ask and answer the following questions

- Is there an extremely high volume of work?
- Is the workload consistent or does it have peaks and troughs of intensity?
- Does the work require intense concentration for most of the time?
- Does a high proportion of the work have to be completed very quickly?
- Are there elements of the work that have to be achieved to strict deadlines that may require working beyond normal working hours?
- Are there serious immediate consequences for the individual/ colleagues/ the wider unit if work is not completed accurately or on time?
- Is there an expectation/ culture that employees will work beyond their contracted hours?
- Is there any evidence that employees are responding to perceived expectations created by local culture rather than actual expectations?
- Does the work activity require employees to frequently deal with confrontational situations/ conversations, over the 'phone, by email or face-to-face?

- Does the physical environment itself cause additional pressure e.g. through distractions such as high noise levels?

B. Control

- To what extent does the individual manage their own workload?
- Can the individual prioritise their own workload?
- Can the individual determine the timing of their breaks?
- Can the work be delivered through flexible working hours?
- Can any element of the work be delivered through working from home?

C. Support

Support from Managers

- Are there any managers who are lacking in leadership experience or new to the organisation?
- Have there been any recent formal or informal allegations from staff of perceived bullying or harassment, directed at their managers?
- Do time constraints make it difficult for leaders to prioritise the managerial element of their role?
- Is there any evidence to suggest managers are unfamiliar with key employee-focussed policies?
- Is sickness absence unusually high in certain work teams?
- Do staff find the work environment encouraging and supportive?

Support from Colleagues

- Have there been recent complaints from staff who feel colleagues don't "pull their weight"?
- Is there a tendency for employees to operate independently of colleagues, focusing on personal goals and targets rather than contributing to wider team/ school objectives?
- Have there been recent incidents or allegations of disrespectful behaviour between colleagues?

D. Relationships

- Is there any existing or previous history of strained working relationships amongst staff involved in the work activity? (This could either be between colleagues or between staff and their line managers or other staff with whom they are required to work closely.)
- Are any forthcoming changes likely to create the potential for friction between team members or between staff and others they work closely with?
- Have there been any recent formal or informal allegations from staff of perceived bullying or harassment?

E. Role

- Do all employees understand their role – this is particularly relevant following changes to the job description, a change to new post for an employee or organisational changes.
- Is there a generally good understanding by post holders of the way their role supports local and organisational objectives?

F. Change (local and wider organisational change)

- Is there soon proposed to be, or has there recently been any substantial local or organisational change that potentially impacts directly or indirectly on the role or morale of employees?
- Is such change currently viewed either apprehensively or negatively by a high proportion of employees?

G. External Factors for consideration

Whilst the predominant focus here is on work-related stressors, it is important to consider non-work issues that make individual employees more vulnerable. These could include, for instance:

- Previous history of mental health issues
- Bereavement
- Relationship difficulties
- Serious illness of individual or a dependant
- Severe financial difficulties

Clearly these may render an employee less able to cope with even routine work pressures. Obviously, they can only be taken into consideration if the employee chooses to make their employer aware of them; if they do, an individual risk assessment should be carried out.

Existing Control Measures

The following questions, under each of the HSE stress factors, are designed to help you identify what you may already have in place to control the level of risk posed by the potential hazards you identified above

A. Demands

- Are demands measured through personal work plans, workload models or similar mechanism?
- Are clearly prioritised objectives set through P&DR and reviewed on a regular basis in response to unexpected changes?
- Do Personal Development Plans identify any skills gaps for new work and address these through suitable training and support of employees?
- Do staff receive training in dealing with confrontational situations where they arise?
- Is workload manageability discussed regularly with employees? Do they include conflicting priorities management, and are adjustments made to priorities/ deadlines to allow for unplanned events that impact on the demands?
- Can additional resource be made available to help in times of particularly high seasonal demand, staff absences or new, unplanned for, work?
- Are measures in place for ensuring employees do not work excessive hours, do take regular breaks, and stay within the legal working boundaries established by the Working Time Regulations?

B. Control

- Do you operate any local flexible working options for employees to assist with work/life balance pressures?
- Are employees involved in designing workload models etc ?
- Are projects allocated to teams rather than individuals to enable them to contribute to the project design and management and task allocation processes?
- Are measures in place to empower employees to make decisions about how they work?

C. Support

Support from Managers

- Are staff members who manage other employees suitably developed for this element of their role?
- Is performance management in place and do staff receive at least annual performance and development reviews?
- Do staff members receive supportive feedback on their performance throughout the year, including recognition of work well done?
- Are there arrangements in place to provide additional support for staff members during emotionally demanding work situations?

- Do “open door” policies exist to encourage staff to approach managers to discuss work-related problems?
- Is there a good awareness of the support services available to staff within and through the University – such as Occupational Health, staff counselling through the external Employee Assistance Programme, chaplaincy etc.?
- Are managers made familiar with key policies including Management of Sickness Absence Policy, Management of Stress?
- Have all managers completed the Equality & Diversity for Managers e- training module?
- Do managers support phased returns to work, and other reasonable adjustments where appropriate and operationally feasible, after significant periods of absence?

Support from Colleagues

- Is a collaborative, collegiate approach encouraged within the work team?
- Is there zero tolerance of disrespectful behaviour between colleagues?
- Is the balance of workload amongst colleagues reviewed regularly and adjusted as appropriate to allow for new priorities, staff absence or other unplanned events?

D. Relationships

- Is there a local policy or code on appropriate conduct?
- Are staff members made aware of the Dignity at Work Policy?
- Have all staff members completed the Equality & Diversity awareness e-training module?
- Are there social events to provide opportunities for staff to get together in a relaxed, informal environment?

E. Role

- Are roles clearly described in the job descriptions?
- Are the job descriptions reviewed regularly and kept up to date and reflective of current circumstances?
- Are the Person Specifications suitable and sufficient?
- Do recruitment processes focus on suitability of candidates for *all* aspects of the post?
- Are all members of staff taken through an induction when taking up a new post?
- Do managers hold regular one-to-one meetings with staff to discuss work progress?

F. Change

- Are proposals for change widely consulted upon?
- Do members of staff have sufficient opportunities and time to engage with, comment on and contribute to the change process?
- Is change well communicated in appropriate time?
- Are employees supported sufficiently through difficult changes?
- Are managers trained in Managing Change?

G. External Factors

- Are all employees and their managers aware of the services and information available through the Employee Assistance Programme, which extend beyond work-related issues to coping with external challenges?
- When employees raise stressful personal circumstance which are impacting on their performance and ability to cope with normal work pressures, is it customary for an individual stress risk assessment to be carried out, utilising the Stress Hazard Identification form, at Appendix 3 of the Policy for Managing Stress in the Workplace document? (It is recommended that this be conducted in conjunction with the employee and with advice from Occupational Health and Human Resources)

Residual level of Risk – using the Stress Risk Assessment Template

By now you will have gathered information that helps you to assess the level of risk of staff in your area experiencing work-related stress. You now need to consider the information you have for each of the 8 hazard factors, alongside the relevant control measures, to establish the level of risk. Use the risk assessment template below to help.

Ideally, when considering risk assessment, the goal should be to remove the hazard. In relation to work-related stress, this may only be possible in a limited number of situations. Reasonable practicability is the standard adopted in law when considering the cost, both financial and operational, of implementing a control measure. The next best measure is either to reduce the hazard, or the likelihood of it causing harm, through various control mechanisms.

When determining the specific required actions, consider the gaps you found when looking at existing control measures and consider whether equivalent measures could be implemented in the relevant work area. Always consult with the affected staff for their contribution to ideas that might help resolve the difficulties and consequently either remove the hazard or reduce the level of risk.

It is important to appreciate that whilst some control measures help to reduce or prevent stress, others serve only to support employees who are already experiencing stress. Whilst, in time, these support mechanisms may assist those employees in recovering from this episode of stress, and even avoiding future episodes, the employee has already experienced harm. This in no way invalidates such measures which are widely recognised as not only valuable but also an expected facility for staff of responsible employers. However, provision of support services is generally perceived by the regulatory bodies as the minimum standard an employer can adopt to manage workplace stress.

An Action Plan template is provided at the end of the template (H) that you should use to monitor progress in resourcing and implementing Actions. For each hazard factor (A-G, Demands etc.) that you have identified a need for action, list the required action(s), any resource implications, the person(s) responsible for implementing the action and the desired timescale. The final column enables you to record progress for each action, as you review this action plan on a regular basis.

Resourcing new Control Measures

As mentioned earlier, the amount an employer is expected to spend to eliminate, minimise or reduce a risk is dependent on the level of risk, as well as the number of people affected by it. In other words, if the risk is high and potentially impacts on several people, the employer would be expected to be prepared to invest more resource in reducing the risk, than in a case where it only impacted on one person and to a minimal extent. Between these extremes, we are required to apply reasonable practicability when deciding on the suitability of our control measures. (The table at the end of the risk assessment template acts as a guide on allocating appropriate resources.)

Managers may well not have resources within local budgets and it is a reasonable expectation that they should then raise the issue at a School/ College/RI/ Service budget in order to make a case for additional resource. Budget holders must consider such demands alongside other priorities to reach a decision and demonstrate that the principle of reasonable practicability has been applied.