



Stress			Cross-References
Policy	<p>The University will endeavour, so far as is reasonably practicable, to minimise the risk of employees developing work related stress by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carrying out risk assessments in order to identify, manage and control stress caused by work • increasing awareness of work related stress, its causes and ways to combat it • provide appropriate training in good management practices • helping staff to manage stress in themselves and those around them. • providing access to confidential occupational health support and where appropriate counselling • facilitating and managing the return to work of those absent as a result of stress. 		
Responsibility for Implementation	Heads of Departments and Colleges, Human Resources Department, Health & Safety Service, All Employees		
Standards			
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	A generic University wide risk assessment will be carried out by the Health & Safety Service and the results made available to all employees	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	All members of staff should be given on commencement a copy of the University information leaflet on stress (which includes help-line information).	Link to leaflet
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Managers should monitor and review organisational circumstances which may give rise to an increased risk of work related stress; carrying out as required risk assessments to identify areas of specific concern and the controls required to address them.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Where increased risks are identified, the Department / College should take all reasonable measures to address the problems.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	All staff involved should be made aware of the findings of the assessments and be given information and training in any procedures deemed necessary to further minimise the risk.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	Managers who are aware that a member of staff is suffering from psychological health problems, including work related stress, should refer them to Occupational Health as soon as possible	H R Guidance for Managers – Monitoring absence
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	Any member of staff who is aware that they have an existing problem with work related stress should either inform their Manager or contact the University Occupational Health Adviser	
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	Managers who are made aware of specific individual concerns then they should take steps to address them.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	Members of staff should co-operate with the University in minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, work-related stress.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	All staff involved in the supervision or management of others should be offered or have access to appropriate training on the management of stress in the workplace	Link to e- learning package and training department web site
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	Stress management awareness training should be made available to all members of staff.	Link to e- learning package and training department web site

Definitions	Stress – “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them.” (HSE)																				
	‘Manager’ means any person who has supervisor responsibility for other employees																				
Relevant Legislation	Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999		OHSIS																		
Further Information	<p>Tackling Stress: The Management Approach http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/healthandsafety/manual/TacklingStressHSELeaflet.pdf</p> <p>HSE Work Related Stress website http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/</p> <p>MANAGEMENT STANDARDS HSE http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm</p> <p>Working Together to Reduce Stress at Work – A Guide for Employees. http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg424.pdf</p> <p>Shift - Line Manager resource http://www.shift.org.uk/</p>																				
Notes																					
	1	To see the generic risk assessment underpinning this Health & Safety Manual section follow the link.	Link to Stress: Generic Risk Assessment																		
	2	<p>A number of Human Resources policies and procedures also contribute to the University's overall approach to managing stress:-</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Respect at Work & Study</td> <td>Promotion and Probation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Career Development & Appraisal</td> <td>Capability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Staff Development and Training</td> <td>Monitoring Absence</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Role Evaluation</td> <td>Job Share</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Diversity and Equality</td> <td>Work Life Balance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recruitment</td> <td>Discipline & Grievance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leave of Absence</td> <td>Alcohol and Drug Abuse</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mentoring</td> <td>Consultation (JCNC'S)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maternity</td> <td>Pre-employment Health Screening</td> </tr> </table>	Respect at Work & Study	Promotion and Probation	Career Development & Appraisal	Capability	Staff Development and Training	Monitoring Absence	Role Evaluation	Job Share	Diversity and Equality	Work Life Balance	Recruitment	Discipline & Grievance	Leave of Absence	Alcohol and Drug Abuse	Mentoring	Consultation (JCNC'S)	Maternity	Pre-employment Health Screening	Link to Human Resources web site
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	3	A number of other University health and safety policies and procedures are also relevant	Link to H&S Manual																		
	4	Further guidance on carrying out assessments is attached as Appendix 2.	Link to Guidance Notes on Stress Risk Assessments Appendix 2																		
Review Date	2012																				

STRESS: GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

What is stress?

Pressure is an essential part of living. In its most innocuous form it is harmless to the individual and generally accepted but when pressure becomes excessive it can turn into stress which can be extremely damaging to an individual. Stress develops when an individual attempts to cope with events or problems beyond their capacity and available resources. Stress may be conscious or unconscious: it becomes present when the individual reacts to a situation with a stress response. The particular situation may not in itself cause stress: some people thrive on and are stimulated by a certain level of stress until overload develops.

Work-related stress has recently been defined by the Health and Safety Executive as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope”.

We have a moral and social responsibility towards our employees; however it is also a legal obligation to keep our employees safe from harm both physically and mentally.

Stress at work can have a significant effect upon the efficiency of the University by reducing output; affecting quality by reducing standards, leading to disruption and increase in costs with high staff turnover and sickness absence and the threat of legal claims.

What are the causes of stress?

Some pressure at work is to be expected and indeed at a certain level can have a positive and creative effect. The problem with stress begins when that level is over-stepped.

Unfortunately for managers, the level of stress at which individuals can cope varies from person to person – there is no standard level. Different pressures will produce different reactions and no two people will react in exactly the same way to the same set of circumstances.

There are many possible sources of stress but the most commonly reported are:

- poor working conditions
- poor job design
- ill defined or conflicting responsibilities
- being set tasks inappropriate to ability (including under utilisation of skills)
- pressure of work
- lack of adequate training
- lack of support or assistance
- inadequate staffing
- lack of control over work demands
- lack of support or assistance
- inflexible and over-demanding work schedules
- uncertainty, particularly continual changes in organisation structure or responsibilities
- poor communication and lack of involvement in decision making
- certain management styles
- bullying or harassment
- poor relations with colleagues

Work related problems can be exacerbated by family problems and these factors need to be taken into account including such things as relationship problems, financial worries, etc.

What are the typical signs of stress that I should be looking out for in my staff?

Withdrawal

- increase in absenteeism, especially frequent short absences which could be down to lowered resistance to minor illnesses
- increase in staff turnover
- poor timekeeping (arriving late, leaving early, long lunch breaks)
- change in working relationships, quieter, not interacting with other colleagues

Poor work performance

- less output
- loss of creativity
- making more mistakes
- poor decision making
- increased occurrence of accidents

Poor interpersonal relationships at work

- personality clashes

- arguments
- hostility and aggression
- malicious gossip
- criticism of others
- emotional responses

Staff attitude and behaviour

- mood swings
- tension and irritability
- poor concentration and judgment
- inability to switch off
- repetition of arguments in meetings
- refusal to listen to advice and suggestions
- loss of motivation or commitment or becoming withdrawn
- staff working long hours but with decreasing effectiveness
- increase in disciplinary issues

Displaying one or more of these behaviours does not automatically mean that the individual is suffering from stress. Consider whether patterns of behaviour are emerging which would indicate an underlying problem. Discuss it with the individual sensitively and in private.

What can I do to try to prevent stress?

- Ensure that all new staff in your department/section receives a planned local induction programme which fully prepares them for their work at the University. Ensure that they attend the University induction session ('Welcome to Durham').
- Show that you take stress seriously and be understanding towards people who admit to being under too much pressure.
- Have an open and understanding attitude to what your staff say to you about the pressures of their work, and look for signs of stress.
- Ensure your staff have the skills and training they need to do their job and make proper use of those skills.
- If staff are promoted in your area or their roles change, ensure they are given appropriate advice, support and training for their new role.
- Set well-defined and realistic objectives.
- If possible, provide some scope for people to participate in decision making and planning and to influence the way their jobs are done to increase their interest and ownership.
- Ensure your staff are treated fairly and consistently and they are aware that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
- Recognise and praise individual and group efforts and achievements.
- Ensure that any criticism you have to give is constructive with the aim of improving future performance and not to attribute blame.
- Ensure good two-way communication, especially at times of change.
- Try to provide the opportunity for informal discussions as well as formal meetings.
- In accordance with the Absence Management policy, monitor absence in your department/section. When your staff are absent, be sensitive when establishing the nature of the illness, and ensure you carry out a return to work interview on their return. Contact and offer support to staff on longer-term absences. Ensure you refer staff absent due to sickness to the Occupational Health Adviser at the appropriate stage, in accordance with the Absence Management policy.

How should I deal with an employee complaint about stress?

Listen carefully to what the employee has to say. If the stress is work-related:

- Identify the source(s) of stress – the 'stressors'.
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help.
- Encourage the individual to seek information and advice about coping strategies and techniques through the confidential helpline provided by the Occupational Health Adviser (link to [Stress Management Leaflet](#)).
- In consultation with the Occupational Health Adviser and your Human Resources representative, discuss with the individual what could be done to reduce the risk of stress.
- If the employee is returning from a period of absence due to work-related stress, **you should explore with them what possible adjustments could be made to reduce the risk of stress immediately on their return.**

Where the problem is not work-related, discuss with the individual the measures they are taking to try to resolve the problem. Advise them of the services available to them via the Occupational Health Adviser.

Never ignore a complaint about stress. If you are in any doubt about what action to take, consult your Human Resources representative.

Guidance Notes on Stress Risk Assessments

These notes are a guide to assist managers to identify potential situations and occurrences which could have an adverse health effect upon employees with reference to stress related illness and to possible solutions.

The issues may be used as a checklist to help identify root causes of stress. This may be done either as a pro-active exercise or in response to a specific problem. Possible solutions are offered to assist in decisions about what action can be taken.

The causes and the suggested solutions are not necessarily fully comprehensive. There may be other issues and there may be different ways of solving a problem. Further advice is available from the Human Resources Department and the University Occupational Health Adviser.

The guidance is structured under three main headings:

- a) Those issues generated by the way work is organised
- b) Problems arising from the working environment, and
- c) Personal issues.

Organisational

Cultural:-

The issues / problems / hazards normally associated with the culture of an organisation can be difficult to both identify and resolve. These can include items such as:-

- long hours being considered normal and an expectation that staff will work as long as is necessary to get the job done;
- employees are unaware of the strategic direction of the University/Department/ College;
- problems when raised are not addressed or resolved.

Control methods or solutions for these types of perceived issues can include:-

- *regular communication with staff such as with team briefings;*
- *consultation with staff regarding work practices and participation with decision making process;*
- *ensuring that staff are supported both emotionally and practically when issues are identified.*

Demands:-

Problems can arise with individuals when demands are placed upon them. Situations that can cause problems include: -

- long term absences of other staff members putting additional demands on remaining staff;
- peaks & troughs in work load;
- increases in work loads associated with expansion of core services;
- work under-load, i.e. repetitive boring tasks;
- capability - when the individual does not have the skills or ability to carry out the tasks required of them.

Solving these types of issues can include: -

- *planning ahead to cover long term absences;*
- *delegation after discussion with staff the tasks which need to be covered for shorter absences; regular reviews with teams to identify problem areas;*
- *discussing high work load occasions with staff to identify solutions;*
- *discussing with individuals their work loads and identifying possible areas of concern and solutions;*
- *being aware of increases in subsidiary work e.g. increase in student numbers and the cascade effect.*

Control:

A perceived lack of control over how work is carried out and involvement in planning how work is done can result in problems within the work place. Under-use of an individual's skills and abilities and lack of participation in decision making processes can be an issue.

In addressing this type of issue, solutions can include:-

- *Team briefings to include discussion on work schedules and factors affecting it;*
- *appraisals to identify individual's available skills and how they can be used to the most productive effect;*
- *delegation of planning work schedules;*
- *supportive environment in the event of problems arising or changes in work load.*

Relationships:

Relationships describe the way we interact with other individuals and issues can arise within the working environment when problems occur with these relationships. Types of problems can include:-

- a general breakdown between colleagues;
- bullying or harassment of individuals by others.

Resolving relationship issues can be one of the most difficult aspects of management, solutions to this type of problem can include:-

- *encouraging departmental communication via regular team briefings for the dissemination of information and early resolution of issues;*
- *access to independent mediation to aid in re-establishing relationships;*
- *ensuring all staff are aware of the procedures that are in place to prevent this occurring and support them at work;*
- *ensuring staff are aware of the access to independent advice and support via the harassment officers.*

Change:

Change within an organisation can occur in two ways, major changes such as restructuring and down-sizing or continuous minor changes to working practices in response to technological advancement or new guidance. Alteration to working environments can result in individuals feeling anxious about their employment status and abilities to cope.

Good clear open communication regarding all change is essential. "Bottom" up information flow as well as "Top" down will ensure managers are aware of individual concerns; involve staff in the change process from the outset and continue to do so throughout the process and when it is over; review progress regularly and communicate results to everyone involved.

Role:

Clarity of role for an individual is essential; areas of concern can arise when there is either conflict or ambiguity regarding a person's role. The type of issues that can arise include: -

- conflicting demands on an individual when others have differing expectations of the role;
- having to carry out tasks which the individual does not believe are part of their role;
- ambiguity regarding role as there is no job description;
- lack of clarity of role following changes to work methods / tasks.

Confusion can be avoided and issues resolved by regular review of job description and role analysis within both appraisal situations and following periods of restructure and change; regular communications within teams to ensure all individuals are clear about of the current work load/ job and what is expected of them; ensuring all new employees receive a full induction program.

Individual Factors:

It is essential to remember that each employee is an individual and can therefore be affected by work in differing ways. Issues that could cause problems with individuals can include:-

- change of role and insufficient training to support this;

- lack of support for new employees;
- individual not suited for the post for which they are employed.

In addressing an individual's requirements in conjunction with those of the organisation, solutions can be found. Some examples of this include:-

- *implementation of correct recruitment procedures to ensure appropriate job specifications and personal requirements for the post are developed;*
- *all new employees to attend an induction program and to have access to a "mentor" for information / support and guidance;*
- *all employees to attend identified training to fulfil post requirements.*

Environmental

Environmental issues can also have adverse health effects upon individuals. Examples of some of the issues that can occur include: -

- exposure to excessive or irritating noise;
- inappropriate ventilation or exposure to extremes of temperature;
- poor ergonomic design including posture and repetitive movements;
- insufficient lighting, no natural light, glare from too bright a light source.

Resolution of these issues can be obtained by carrying out an appropriate assessment of the risk as identified in section R2 of the Health & Safety manual and implementing controls to minimize the risk.

These could include: -

- *alterations of work patterns;*
- *job rotation;*
- *training programs;*
- *provision of personal protective equipment.*

Personal

With personal problems employees can sometimes revert to taking sick leave to address what appear to be work / life imbalances. A constructive approach to individual's difficulties could result in better attendance and improved working relationships. Longer term absences have a cascade effect on both the employee and the organisation and speedy interventions can be beneficial to all concerned.

Therefore, although stressors arising in an individual's personal life outside work are not within the University's control or responsibility, a sensitive approach to the issues can be beneficial. Examples of possible situations include: -

- long term illness of family member;
- bereavement;
- marriage / partnership breakdown;
- change in life status e.g. pregnancy / new baby.

Solutions to some of these situations are already available within the policies and procedures in place within the University. Examples of their implementation include:-

- *emergency leave/ parental leave etc.*
- *possible short term alteration to contractual hours to assist resolving difficulties;*
- *access to OH services for support and advice;*
- *use of flexible working to assist in attendance at solicitors / marriage guidance.*

Stress Risk Assessment

Name.....Job.....

College / Department.....

Work Issues / Identified problem.

Existing arrangements implemented

Action Plan / Specific changes to be considered

Review date :-.....

Signed.....Date.....
(Manager)

Signed.....Date.....
(Employee)

Generic Risk Assessment: S3

Name and Department: Entire University	Location: All Departments & Colleges	Activity: Various
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Hazards	Description Risk	Risk Controls	Risk rating
<p>Culture – poor attitude and lack of recognition of the issue, poor communication, lack of consultation, lack of support, hierarchal constraints</p> <p>Demands – work overload, capability and capacity, work under load, physical environment, and psycho social environment.</p> <p>Control - Lack of control over workload, skills used, timescales, work program</p> <p>Relationships – poor communication, bullying & harassment, violence</p> <p>Role – conflict, ambiguity / lack of clarity</p>	Work related Stress / psychological ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing University policies, codes of practice and guidance providing standards for addressing the above hazards:- <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Respect at Work & Study Promotion and Probation Career Development & Appraisal Capability Staff Development and Training Monitoring Absence Role Evaluation Work Life Balance Diversity and Equality Discipline & Grievance Recruitment Alcohol and Drug Abuse Leave of Absence Consultation (JCNC'S) Mentoring Pre-employment Health Screening Maternity Health & Safety Manual Job Share </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for all staff in the leaflet and poster • Training for all staff available via the e - learning site and he training department • Training for managers / supervisors via the e learning 	Low

		<p>site and the training department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance notes for Managers • Advice for managers via the “Shift” website • Access to confidential help and advice via the confidential help line and the Occupational Health Adviser • Access to independent counselling where appropriate via the Occupational Health Adviser • Monitoring of the level of the existing problem via the Leave and Absence Management system • Early intervention of identified problems via the LAMS system and trigger emails • Introduction of workload model in various departments • Annual Staff Review Process • Human Resources contact to assist in the management of change in departments and colleges • Regular Communication via Dialogue and the VC’S Bulletin 	
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Assessor’s Name: Alice Hobson

Job Title: Occupational Health Adviser

Signature: