



University of
St Andrews

Stress policy

Document type	Policy
Scope (applies to)	All staff
Applicability date	27/01/2020
Review / Expiry date	29/06/2023
Approved date	02/11/2022
Approver	Deputy Director
Document owner	Human Resources Officer
School / unit	Human Resources
Document status	Published
Information classification	Public
Equality impact assessment	None
Key terms	Staff/Health and well-being/Mental health
Purpose	Outlines the approach to the prevention and management of occupational stress throughout the University.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.3	Change to review date only.	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	02/11/2022

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Definition	3
3.	Prevention and legal responsibility	3
4.	Responsibilities	4
5.	Other employment procedures	7
6.	Support	8
	Appendix A: Recommended internal and external support contact details	9
	Appendix B: A guide for employees to stress recognition and reduction	11
	Appendix C: Managers guide to managing/recognising stress	15

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University seeks to maintain a positive and supportive working environment for all its employees. It accepts that stressors in the workplace can have a detrimental and negative impact on the organisation and employees – affecting health, morale, absenteeism and work performance.
- 1.2 The University is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and, via this policy and other guidance, aims to establish an effective and consistent approach to the prevention and management of occupational stress throughout the University.
- 1.3 It has adopted the approach recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which is based on a set of 'Management Standards' primarily concentrating on six key areas namely:
 - Demands
 - Control
 - Support
 - Relationships
 - Roles
 - Change
- 1.4 The [HSE website](#) offers full details on the Management Standards and their definitions.

2. Definition

- 2.1 The University adopts the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) definition of stress: "*The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them*"
- 2.2 This definition makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state and a motivating factor when managed correctly and stress, which can occur when pressure becomes excessive, which can be detrimental to an employee's health.
- 2.3 It should be remembered that stress is a state and not an illness and where it lasts for a short time there are normally no lasting effects. However, where stress is sustained over a prolonged period, it can have a significant impact on health and well-being. The identification and reduction of work-related stress is a priority for the University bringing benefit to both the organisation and its employees by taking appropriate action to alleviate and prevent stress.

3. Prevention and legal responsibility

- 3.1 The University recognises its duty of care to its employees and its legal obligation to provide a safe working environment under the Terms of:
 - The Health and Safety at Work act (1974) providing a duty of care to ensure the health & safety of its employees so far as is reasonably practicable.
 - The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations (1999) requiring employers to undertake risk assessment, including stress, and to introduce proactive measures to control identified risks.

3.2 The University is committed to promoting a healthy and supportive working environment and believes that its staff is one of its most important assets and that their health and well-being is essential for effective performance and the provision of high quality teaching, research and support services.

3.3 The University of St Andrews hereby undertakes:

- To take all necessary reasonable and practical steps to prevent occupational stress and, where this is not possible, to minimise its effects.
- To encourage a working environment in which staff and managers are pro-active in enhancing well-being and reducing occupational stress, thereby optimising performance.
- To promote at all times a healthy and safe working environment which fosters a culture of trust, co-operation and mutual respect in which all staff treat one another with dignity and respect.
- To ensure that all staff, at all levels, are aware of the steps that they can take to minimise the effects of stress on themselves and others and their personal responsibilities in this area.
- To provide a framework of policies, procedures and support mechanisms to ensure managers and staff can maintain effective performance at work and to minimise the risk of occupational stress.
- To foster a culture that provides reasonable and practical support where appropriate, for staff with stress-related or mental-health-related issues.
- Make freely available support services for stress-related issues impacting on work performance.
- To promote and encourage action to prevent occupational stress by providing training and developing managers to be effective in their roles.
- To have effective systems to identify, measure and monitor the effects of stress on individuals and the institution, and to establish effective triggers for action. Where 'hot spots' are identified take action by initiating further investigation and ensuring action plans are implemented.
- To encourage a culture of promoting health and well-being and a healthy work-life balance.
- To ensure the effective management of change, through efficient and timely communication with relevant stakeholders.
- To ensure that the Stress Policy and associated guidance notes are adhered to and effectively implemented with the necessary support, resources and mechanisms in place.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Responsibility for the effective management of stress and achieving the management standards rests with all levels of the organisation.

4.2 Organisational responsibilities

4.2.1 The University is committed to dealing with any identified causes of occupational stress and to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that staff work in a positive, safe and supportive working environment by seeking to:

- Promote and provide training in sound management practice and positive management behaviours to all line managers and supervisors of staff;

- Develop the leadership capability and individual leadership competencies of senior and middle management;
- Provide a framework of employment, health and safety policies and procedures to support managers and staff in maintaining effective work performance and to minimise the risk of occupational stress;
- Develop stress management training for all appropriate managers and continuing to deliver and develop stress awareness training for all staff;
- Identify specific occupational stressors and carry out risk assessments to eliminate or control the risks from stress where appropriate;
- Promote partnerships between management, individuals and the recognised trade unions, with the aim of eliminating or minimising sources of stress;
- Establish arrangements and procedures for the early identification of and dealing with cases of stress;
- Provide and develop appropriate employee support services;
- To address root causes of Occupational Stress at an organisational level through adopting effective procedures where identified.

4.3 Heads of Schools and Units and Line Managers Responsibilities:

4.3.1 Heads of Schools and Units are accountable to the Principal's Office for implementing the University Stress Policy in their Schools and Units.

4.3.2 Heads of Schools/Units should actively involve all line managers/supervisors in the implementation of this policy and are also responsible for ensuring that reasonably practicable steps are taken to minimise the potential for exacerbating risks arising in relation to occupational stress by:

- Ensuring effective and clear communication at all times especially where there is organisational or procedural change;
- Ensuring jobs are properly designed, with realistic workloads and demands;
- Ensuring clear lines of communication and reporting structures, providing employees with clear definitions of demands and responsibilities realistic to the post;
- Ensuring adequate training is provided to support employees in fulfilling their role;
- Fostering good employee relations through open and transparent communication and providing feedback on performance through appraisal and one-to-one meetings;
- Creating an open and supportive working environment;
- Monitoring working hours, rest periods and annual leave to ensure employees are taking appropriate breaks;
- Early intervention and resolution of interpersonal/group conflict;
- To ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated and that inappropriate behaviour is dealt with in line with the [Dignity and Respect at Work Policy](#);
- To be aware of changes to employee behaviours which may signify signs of stress and proactively explore these.
- A checklist which can be used as a guide to assist managers in assessing stressors within the 'Management Standards' definitions can be found in the Managers guidance located in [Appendix C](#).
- Whilst risk assessment is a core responsibility of all line managers, Heads of Schools and Units are responsible for ensuring that such assessments are carried out and acted upon where appropriate.

4.4 Environmental Health and Safety / Occupational Health Service Responsibilities

4.4.1 The Occupational Health Service will provide a confidential advisory service and will be pro-active in assisting the University to manage occupational stress issues through:

- Providing specialist advice and assisting with the development and delivery of stress awareness training;
- Providing support and advice to managers in implementing stress risk assessments;
- Supporting individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their managers on how to manage a return to work;
- Integrating stress as part of wider Health & Safety monitoring.

4.5 Human Resources Responsibilities

4.5.1 Human Resources will provide advice and guidance and ensure that a framework of supporting policies and procedures are in place to assist employees and managers to promote a safe and supportive working environment by:

- Providing guidance to employees and managers on stress policies and procedures;
- Monitoring stress-related absences and ensuring the prompt referral to the Occupational Health Service;
- Assisting with the development and delivery of stress awareness and stress management training;
- Providing continuing support to managers and employees in a changing environment and advising on appropriate action to ensure that occupational stressors are eliminated or controlled;
- Developing and reviewing supporting policies and procedures to enhance work performance and organisational effectiveness and fostering a pro-active approach to assisting the organisation to manage stress;
- The provision of courses by Staff Development to support staff with work-related problems. For example, conflict resolution, supervising staff etc.
- Providing a framework for developing the skills and competencies of leaders and managers;
- Consulting with relevant parties e.g. Trade Unions, Occupational Health, Heads of Schools/Units on stress levels and the management thereof;
- Monitoring statistical data on absence, staff turnover, employee relations issues and feedback questionnaires to ensure further exploration or action is undertaken where appropriate;
- Reviewing and monitoring staff survey results, to identify and address any 'hot-spots'/ area of concern;
- Ensuring further investigation or targeted stress audits are conducted in 'hot-spot' areas;
- Assist schools with drawing up action plans of improvement where 'hot-spots' have been identified.

4.6 Employee responsibilities

4.6.1 It is vital that staff play an active role in contributing to their own health and well-being and management of stress to enable them to carry out their role effectively and to minimise the risk of work-related stress. This can be assisted by:

- Ensuring good communication with colleagues and line managers, and by fostering good working relationships;
- Supporting colleagues by sharing information and knowledge and by working cohesively as a team;
- Engaging in discussions about their performance and acting on feedback in a positive manner;
- Being aware of the signs of stress and raising concerns with their manager or with Human Resource or Occupational Health at an early stage in order to seek constructive solutions;
- Making use of the training and support mechanisms provided;
- Showing dignity and respect for others within the workplace at all times, and ensuring bullying and harassment in the workplace is not tolerated by challenging bullying behaviour in colleagues initially informally, in line with the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy, or reporting continued inappropriate behaviours to your line manager or HR.

4.6.2 It is hoped that a proactive approach by all will mitigate the occurrence of potentially harmful levels of stress. However, where an employee's feels under undue pressure resulting in symptoms of stress, they should inform their line manager, Human Resources or Occupational Health as soon as possible.

4.6.3 [Appendix B](#) provides employee guidance in managing stress.

4.7 The Principal's Office

4.7.1 Members of the Principal's Office have individual and collective responsibilities to lead by example and where necessary minimise and monitor, the effects of their decisions on health and safety, including occupational stress.

4.7.2 The accountability to Court for implementing this Policy (as with all parts of the Health & Safety Policy) lies with the Principal. Whilst much of the responsibility for implementation will, if necessity, be delegated via line management, the primary responsibility for ensuring delivery lies with the Office of the Principal. In discharging this responsibility, the Principal's Office will monitor management information relating to stress and will establish such management mechanisms or groups as is necessary to ensure that such information is gathered and considered.

4.8 The University Audit & Risk Committee

4.8.1 The University Audit & Risk Committee will, via the Health & Safety Assurance Group, keep an overview of the effectiveness of this policy and other measures which have been implemented to eliminate or reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety. The Committee will approve reviews of this policy on a regular basis.

5. Other employment procedures

5.1 The University has a number of other employment procedures which assist with minimising the risks of stress and promoting a safe and supportive working environment, such as:

- Grievance policy
- Disciplinary procedure
- Sickness absence policy
- Flexible working policy
- Emergency time off for dependant's policy

5.2 All of the HR policies can be found on the [HR policy webpage](#).

5.3 It should be noted that on occasions managers may have to manage performance, capability or invoke disciplinary procedures which in themselves can be a stressful situation for those involved. However, this should not prevent managers moving forward with a legitimate employment issue in line with the above noted procedures. If during a performance related, capability or disciplinary process an allegation of occupational stress is made, the matter will be referred to Occupational Health and explored accordingly in line with the procedure in hand. However, nothing in this policy should considerably delay or prevent the operation of other relevant policies which may need to be invoked. In such situations line managers should seek the support of their [HR Business Partner](#) on how to manage the situation and each case will be managed relevant to the issues raised.

6. Support

6.1 Where stress is work related, it may be beneficial to discuss your concerns with your line manager in the first instance to see what solutions may be available. In addition, all members of staff are encouraged to contact [Human Resources](#) or the [Occupational Health Service](#) for confidential information and advice on any stress-related matter.

6.2 Further information on areas of internal and external support can be found at [Appendix A](#).

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	Migration of policy to the Governance Zone	Published	Lisa Stewart Human Resources	27/06/2019
1.1	Change to the classification from internal to public	Published	Lisa Stewart Human Resources	23/10/2019
1.2	Minor change to Appendix B "Look ahead" to reflect correct OH link and update to the University training course.	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	27/01/2020
1.3	Change to review date only.	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	02/11/2022

Appendix A: Recommended internal and external support contact details

Recommended internal support contact details

Name of Department	Contact details	Service provided
Chaplaincy	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/chaplaincy/ chaplaincy@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 462866	The Chaplaincy provides guidance and support to all students and staff regardless of their faith or philosophy of life.
Equality and Diversity	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/ diversity@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 461649	Provides a confidential service of advice to individuals (staff, students, visitors) on any aspect of ED&I.
Human Resources	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/ hr.general@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 463096	Provides support to employees of University of St Andrews. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR website and policy page Dedicated HR Business Partner team for each School/Unit
Occupational Health	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ehss/occupationalhealth/ occhealth@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 462750 or 01334 462752	Employees can refer themselves to OH for confidential health advice at any time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-to-one consultation/appointments Recommended adjustments Partnership with external health practitioners i.e. counselling services and CBT, physio.
OSDS	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/osds/ osds@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 467198	OSDS is the University's central provider of professional development for all University staff, and is also responsible for a wide range of organisational development projects and initiatives.
Saints Sport	https://sport.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/ sport@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 462190	Saints Sport is the overarching title and brand that encompasses all of the facilities, services and activities of the University of St Andrews sports department.
Student Services	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/student-services/ theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 462020	Employees can contact Student Services for any student related guidance, support or advice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Monday to Friday; 09:30am to 16:30pm Student Services bespoke web page
Trade Union Representatives	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/workplace-wellbeing/#tradeunions	Trade union representatives are trained to deal and support employees with any workplace related matters of concern.
Wellbeing	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/ wellbeingforstaff@st-andrews.ac.uk	

Recommended external support contact details

Name of Organisation	Contact details	Service provided
Be Mindful	bemindful.co.uk	Information about mindfulness and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). Guidance on how to learn mindfulness, including course listings.
Breathing Space	https://breathingspace.scot/ 0800 838587	Aims to provide an accessible first stop service; assistance at an early stage in order to stop problems from escalating, empathy, understanding and advice, hope and direction.
Friends and family	Are a good source of support; try not to deal with your problems alone. Often openly expressing problems can be beneficial.	
General Practitioner	Your own GP is a good source of advice and can often recommend remedies to assist or may refer you to a local support group/class.	
HSE	http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress	Information about health and safety law in the workplace. Specialist information on stress for employers and employees.
International Stress Management Association	isma.org.uk	Lists stress practitioners by specialist area
Moodjuice	https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Stress.asp	Self-help guide for stress and stress questionnaire including useful tools for managing stress and challenging unhelpful thoughts.
Mind	https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/signs-of-stress/#.XRSXs-tKjME Mind infoline 0300 123 3393 or text 86463	Offers online chat, information from trained professionals on all types of mental health problems, where to seek help, offers advice on medication and alternative therapies.
NHS Helpline	NHS 111 www.111.nhs.uk	NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do.
NHS: Moodzone	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-stress/	Offers helpful support, audio guides, real life stories and advice in how to cope and manage stress.
NHS Health Scotland	https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/struggling-with-stress	Offers steps to deal with stress, live chat support, other health referral sites, and techniques.
Samaritans	116 123 jo@samaritans.org samaritans.org	24-hour emotional support for anyone who needs to talk. Calls are free from all providers and do not appear on bills.
Stressbusting	stressbusting.co.uk	Information about stress and techniques for coping. Lists several talking treatments and alternative therapies that can be used to treat stress.

Appendix B: A guide for employees to stress recognition and reduction

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide information to all members of staff about stress, its common causes and effects and to identify actions that can be taken to lessen the harmful effects of prolonged stress. Stress can be caused by internal or external factors to the workplace and this guide aims to provide members of staff with information on how to reduce stress and where to seek help. This guide should be read in conjunction with the Stress Policy.

A measure of pressure can be beneficial especially when it helps to motivate and stimulate an individual, however it can become a problem if the stressors become more than a person can comfortably tolerate, thereby causing distress. The result of this is often ill health and a decrease in self-confidence, work efficiency and performance. Therefore, the early recognition of an individual's distress, with effective remedial action, can benefit not only the individual concerned but also the workplace.

What is stress?

The University adopts the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) definition of stress: *"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them"*

Stress is normally experienced when a person believes that demand/pressure is exceeding their capacity to cope. Essentially, this reaction is experienced when a person finds it difficult to handle the pressures placed upon him/her. A stress reaction is an individual response and what may constitute stress for one individual may not be stressful for another; similarly, the type and severity of stress response varies from one individual to another.

Causes of stress

There are varying sources of stress such as family concerns, personal relationships, workplace relationships, work you are unable to complete or are ill equipped/trained to do, financial worries, personal and family ill health, workload and ability to cope with it, etc. Even positive events can be stressful, e.g. holidays, weddings and moving to a new house.

The HSE define 6 key categories which are the main causes of stress within the workplace and have developed a set of 'Management Standards:' to assist with the management and reduction of stress. Full description of the 'Management Standards' can be obtained from the [HSE website](#).

The following provides some examples of typical stressors at work:

Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work overload • Boring/Repetitive duties • Inadequate resources • Physical environment i.e. lighting, space, temperature, disruptions etc. • Psychological working environment: Verbal abuse, inappropriate behaviours • Working long hours – not taking lunch breaks/annual leave • People management issues • Inadequate allocation of work
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being able to manage the demands of the job and life outside work • Rigid working patterns and deadlines imposed with no autonomy or control allowed • Conflicting work demands – from different managers or aspects of the job • Two-way conversation and discussion not actively encouraged to discuss issues
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity of job role – no job descriptions/objective setting • Employees unaware of policies and procedures in place to support them and to be used • Lack of one-one communication/meetings/feedback
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support and encouragement from managers and colleagues • Lack of development/career progression opportunities • Lack of information sharing/withholding information • A working culture of encouraging long or unsociable hours i.e. seeing colleagues as weak if they don't consistently work long hours
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor working relationships with managers/teams • Combative or confrontational communication styles • Poor communication and information sharing • Not dealing with complaints/disputes at an early stage
Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor communication – uncertainty about what is happening • Fears about job security • Ineffective time planning of change • Insufficient training or knowledge transfer on new systems/processes • No consultation/engagement.

It should be noted on occasions there will be variations and increased demands on individual workloads and changes in working relationships, management style and the ability to consult or communicate from time to time, to ensure operational need is met, which is acceptable management practice. However, if there is a continued and regular pattern of consistent stressors in the workplace, that is when action should be taken to discuss and explore the issues with your line manager, HR or Occupational Health.

Recognising stress in yourself and others

Stress can present itself through a wide range of physical, behavioural and/or psychological symptoms. Common symptoms include:

Physical	Headaches, sleep disturbances, nausea, tearfulness, muscular aches and pains, susceptibility to infections with an increase in cold/flu type illnesses etc. When stress is experienced over long periods the acute stress reaction may evolve into a chronic condition with the associated concerns of persistent high blood pressure, development of digestive disorders, e.g. stomach ulcers; there is also an increased risk of strokes, and heart attacks.
Behavioural	Poor concentration, memory loss, irritability, substance abuse (i.e. increase in intake of alcohol, coffee, tobacco), lateness, an increase in absenteeism, reduced work performance, more accidents at work and at home, an inability to achieve a good performance at work despite good intentions and plans, withdrawal from usual social contacts.
Psychological	Depression, misplaced anxiety, apathy, lack of motivation, poor concentration and memory, low self-esteem, fear of failure, uncharacteristic behaviour.

Stress reduction/management

People may experience such symptoms from time to time for other reasons than stress related matters, whether work related or personal. However, if you find yourself experiencing a number of these conditions over a period of time, the following solutions may help:

Identify personal stressors

If you can, work out what in particular stresses you to identify the cause of your state of stress and then explore some practical ways to minimise the cause. There may be some issues you cannot change immediately, but you can put in place coping strategies or there may be other stressors you can immediately alter or avoid.

Look after yourself

- Take up exercise, you may find learning a relaxation exercise or attending a yoga class beneficial. Alternatively, you may find that vigorous physical exercise such as swimming or walking has a greater effect on you.
- Plan to eat an enjoyable nutritious diet, take a proper meal break and sit down and spend time over your food.
- Ensure you get enough sleep, plan a couple of early nights per week. Find ways of relaxing and “switching off,” often getting involved with a hobby/interest that demands intense focus and concentration is beneficial.
- Plan your time and try to keep to schedule.
- When feeling rushed you should deliberately slow down and take more time over every action than you need (or more than your stressed state is making you take).
- Tackle one thing at a time.
- Make a list of priorities and stick to it. Do the easiest first – you get a feeling of achievement as you proceed through the list.

Communicate with your manager

If you have concerns about any aspects of your role relating to the 6 mentioned categories discuss your concerns with your managers and offer considered solutions/recommendations. Suggest innovative ways of working to reduce stressors for consideration. Early communication and intervention are key in reducing stressors.

Look ahead

Forward planning for stressful events can assist you e.g. there will be certain times of the year that place heavy demands on your workload and therefore cause stress, such as Matriculation, Examinations, etc. If you are aware of a pressured time and you would like some advice on individual coping strategies to assist you through that time you can contact [Occupation Health](#) for confidential advice and guidance, and/or book onto the University's workshop, "Mental Wellbeing/Steps for Stress". This course can be booked through the University's online [Personal Development Management System \(PDMS\)](#).

Appendix C: Managers guide to managing/recognising stress

Introduction

This guide should be read in conjunction with the University's Stress Policy. It is intended to provide further information to managers on the causes and avoidance of stress in the workplace and possible steps that can be taken to avoid stress in the workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regards occupational stress as a major employment risk. As well as the distress caused to individuals, stress-related employee absence is estimated to cost the UK economy in the region of £3.8 billion per year.

The HSE's current guidance emphasises that effective stress management does not have to be a separate activity but should be part of everyday management and behaviour. The HSE have developed a [competency indicator](#), where managers can complete a survey which provides results against the management competencies. It is a totally interactive spreadsheet and is totally confidential.

This guidance will demonstrate the main stressors within each section and identify positive and negative management behaviours which could influence these stressors.

The Scottish Government have an online guide providing practical ways of dealing with stress. This information can be accessed via the following website www.stepsforstress.org/

Recognising signs of stress

Employees have a duty to look after their own Health and Safety at work, and to draw problems to the attention of their managers, at an early stage. However, managers should also be alert for signs of stress amongst their staff. The key indicators of stress may be;

- Change in an employee's normal behaviour – e.g. irritability/ withdrawn/unpredictability, uncharacteristic behaviours.
- Change in their appearance.
- Sudden Lack of concentration/commitment e.g. lateness.
- Absenteeism.

Identifying the signs of stress at an early stage increases the possibility that action can be taken to deal with the symptoms and the underlying causes, thus minimising the risk to the individual's health and well-being and the effects on the department.

Common causes of workplace stress

There are several causes of workplace stress some of which may be work-related or some originating from an individual's personal life, either way it is a manager's responsibility to identify stressors within their department and put actions in place either departmental wide or individually.

The management of stress should be integrated into everyday management and forms part of the annual Health and Safety Audit. The [stress risk assessment](#) provides a checklist for managers in accordance with the Management Standards, which can be used to help carry out individual or team-based risk assessments, identify adjustments to reduce stressors and put actions in place to minimise the risk of continued or increasing stress.

The list below highlights some of the main stressors categorised under [HSE 'Management Standards' framework](#).

Triggers of stress and management behaviours which impact:

<p>Demand <i>Employees indicate they can cope with the demands of their job.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work overload • Boring/Repetitive duties • Inadequate resources • Physical environment i.e. lighting, space, temperature, disruptions etc. • Psychological working environment: Verbal abuse, inappropriate behaviours • Working long hours – not taking lunch breaks/annual leave • People management issues • Inadequate allocation of work
<p>Positive management behaviours</p>	<p>Negative management behaviours</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying if additional resources can be brought in. • Awareness of team members abilities and provide training where appropriate. • Monitoring workload and refusing additional work when the team are under pressure / setting realistic deadlines. • Following through problems on behalf of employees/foster a problem-solving approach. • Developing action plans and plan/forecast workloads. • Review processes to identify improvements. • Promote task rotation/job enrichment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegating work unequally. • Creating unrealistic deadlines. • Listening but not taking action. • Lack of consistency in approach / being indecisive. • Panicking and not forward planning workflow and deadlines. • Not being aware of team pressures.
<p>Control <i>Employee indicates that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being able to manage the demands of the job and life outside work • Rigid working patterns and deadlines imposed with no autonomy or control allowed • Conflicting work demands – from different managers or aspects of the job • Two-way conversation and discussion not actively encouraged to discuss issues
<p>Positive management behaviours</p>	<p>Negative management behaviours</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusting employees to do their work/empowerment. • Steering employees in a direction rather than imposing. • Knows when to consult employees and when to decide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micromanagement. • Imposing 'it's my way or no way'. • Not listening to employees and making decisions without consultation. • Not allowing time off for employee's development and to attend training courses. • Not listening to new ideas or allowing employees to suggest and try improved ways of working.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for employees to air views and holds regular meetings. Encourages staff to develop and reviews development. 	
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Role <i>Employees indicate they understand their role and responsibilities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clarity of job role – no job descriptions/objective setting Employees unaware of policies and procedures in place to support them and to be used Lack of one-one communication/meetings/feedback
Positive management behaviours	Negative management behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps teams informed of what is happening with the department and the organisation. Communicates clear goals and objectives. Clearly defines roles, expectations and lines of communication. Regular meetings and two-way communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps people in the dark. Often makes decisions and holds meeting behind closed doors with no consultation in situations where consultation would have been appropriate. Does not update and have regular meetings to communicate changes. Talks to others about actions not completed without approaching the employee concerned.

Support <i>Employees indicate they receive adequate support and information from colleagues and managers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of support and encouragement from managers and colleagues Lack of development/career progression opportunities Lack of information sharing/withholding information A working culture of encouraging long or unsociable hours i.e. seeing colleagues as weak if they don't consistently work long hours
Positive management behaviours	Negative management behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring all health and safety requirements are met. E.g. working time directive. Praising work/acknowledging employee efforts. Providing supportive/constructive criticism. Operating a no blame culture and problem-solving approach. Flexibility to support employee's if needing time off. Having an awareness of the employee's pressures outside work. Encouraging development and training having regular 1-1 meetings. Leading from the front and taking responsibility 'buck stops with me.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not taking H&S issues seriously and questioning the ability of an employee who raises a H&S issue. Not giving credit when jobs done well/deadlines met. Views feedback as 'one way' or giving feedback that employees are wrong just because their way of working is different. Assuming everyone is ok. Not having knowledge and understanding of your teams' tasks/workloads. No consideration of work life balance. Badgering an employee as to what is wrong.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks help and advice from Occupational Health/HR. 	
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor working relationships with managers/teams Combative or confrontational communication styles Poor communication and information sharing Not dealing with complaints/disputes at an early stage
Positive management behaviours	Negative management behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening objectively to both sides of conflict. Supporting and investigating complaints. Dealing with conflict at an early stage and flowing up on actions. Having a positive approach and staying calm when under pressure. Keeps employees' issues private and confidential. Admits when wrong. Treats all employees equally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not dealing with complaints/issues and hoping it will resolve itself Taking sides Passing on their pressures to employees/being unpredictable and losing temper Talks about employee's issues with other staff members/making personal issues public Makes promises and does not deliver

Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor communication – uncertainty about what is happening Fears about job security Ineffective time planning of change Insufficient training or knowledge transfer on new systems/processes No consultation/engagement.
Positive management behaviours	Negative management behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep team informed with regular meeting and communication updates – 2-way communication. Communicates clear goals and objectives and expectations. Provides timely information and consult Provides adequate support e.g. training. Considers group dynamics and physical working environment/positioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave team members in the dark about changes. Communicating at the last minute. Allowing people to hear messages through the grape vine. Not allowing 2-way communication on matters of change.

Dealing with individual cases of stress

Stress should not be a reason for managers to be afraid to manage. If a stress related illness is reported it should be treated as any other sickness absence. Below are some steps that should be taken.

- Treat stressed employees in the same way as those with a physical health problem.

- Discuss the issue with the member of staff and demonstrate that you are concerned with their health. If work is affected, discuss the problems with an [HR Business Partner](#) and explore the option of a referral to [Occupational Health](#).
- Ask if there is anything as a manager you can do to help/try and identify the stressors. The [stress risk assessment](#) provides a basis for conducting basic risk assessment.
- Seek advice from the individual on any action that could be taken to alleviate the stress e.g. simple modifications to work for a short period, increase communication etc.
- Advise the individual about [sources of help](#) within or out with the University.
- Document agreed actions and actively follow up to ensure stress levels have been reduced.
- Review and if necessary, modify the work tasks and responsibilities of individuals who have had sickness absence due to stress as a result of their work.
- Be aware of the impact of stressed employees on other members of staff.
- If you are concerned about stress in the workplace, advice can be sought from Janey Watt, Occupational Health Adviser, ext 2752, e-mail [jw235](#) or Human Resources.