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Health and Safety

# Management of Work-Related Stress Policy

SAF-POL-STR

# Document Control

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# Management of Work-Related Stress Policy

## 1. Introduction

**University policies establish standards and expectations for health and safety across the organisation and set the minimum standards expected.**

The health, safety and wellbeing of our staff at the University of Nottingham is of paramount importance. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

The University will take a proactive, preventative approach to managing work-related stress through this Policy, and our Health and Safety Vision.

Each working unit, which may be a Faculty, Department, Site, Institute or School and will be referred to as a Business Unit in this policy. Any standard(s) imposed at a local level must meet all requirements set out in this policy. Where there is a discrepancy, the University policy takes precedence.

## 2. Scope

This policy covers the safe and effective management of work-related stress across all University activities.

This policy applies to all members of staff employed by the University of Nottingham. Students (and in particular Post Graduate Researchers (PGR's)) are outside the scope of this policy as there are existing mechanisms and support for their health and wellbeing in place led by [Student Services](#).

The Health and Safety Department has established a University Health and Safety Management System (HSMS). The system is detailed in Health and Safety Management Systems Framework (MAN1.1) alongside the University Health and Safety Policy (P2) and creates a framework for the organisational management of health and safety at the University. All University policies and guidance are written to account for and implement these arrangements.

## 3. Regulatory Background

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) - requires employers to put in place arrangements to control health and safety risks (including Work-related stress) by undertaking an assessment of risk and acting on its findings.

Managing the Causes of Work-Related Stress Guidance (HSG218) - the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have developed Management Standards to support organisations in managing the risks from stress and these are regarded as best practice and will be adopted by the University of Nottingham.

## 4. Definitions

### Stress

The HSE defines stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them’. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be positive if managed correctly, and stress, which is likely to be detrimental to physical or mental health if it is prolonged.

Stress affects people differently, what stresses one person may not affect another, and employers must match demands to a range of factors such as the employees' skills, knowledge, and experience. There are well characterised sources of stress in the workplace as defined under the HSE Management Standards.

Staff may experience periods of pressure at work, and short periods of pressure are not necessarily of concern. It is the risk from sustained and / or excessive pressure, without the opportunity to recover, that needs to be assessed and measures put in place to control the risk of adverse effects.

### Stress Risk Factors/Stressors

An event or condition that results in physical or emotional stress. Within the work environment this may include one or more of the following: Demands, Control, Relationships, Role, Change, or Support (see Stress Risk Factors under section 6) Outside the work environment this may include bereavement, divorce, moving house.

### HSE Management Standards

The HSE has designed the Management Standards approach to help employers manage the causes of work-related stress. It is based on the familiar ‘Five steps to risk assessment’ model, requiring management and staff to work together. The Standards refer to six areas of work that can lead to stress if not properly managed. (See Stress Risk Factors under Section 6)

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

### University Council will

- Receive annual assurance reports for review from the Health and Safety Committee on compliance with this policy.

### University Executive Board (UEB) will

- Seek assurance that they are provided with information on the significant risks from stress facing the institution

- Seek assurance that all statutory requirements are met for identifying and managing work-related stress
- Seek assurance that all health and safety arrangements for managing work-related stress are adequately resourced
- Seek assurance that those with risk management and assessment responsibilities for work-related stress are adequately trained and competent
- Seek assurance that there is a process for monitoring and reviewing arrangements for the management of work-related stress
- Seek assurance that institutional level work-related stress action plans are in place and adequately monitored
- Seek assurance that competent health and safety advice is available to support Business Units in managing and assessing risks of work-related stress
- Be notified of any significant incident or enforcement action in relation to work-related stress.

### **Health and Safety Committee will**

- Be the formal oversight and compliance committee for the University and will provide assurance to University Council and University Executive Board (UEB)
- Seek assurance from the Health and Safety Director and the Director of Human Resources that the requirements of this policy are being met across the University
- Take into account the results of audits, surveys and views of the workforce in relation to the management of work-related stress
- Ensure that a university level work-related stress action plan is completed and actions implemented in a timely manner.
- Promote good practice among university staff in relation to the management work-related stress identified in this policy
- Ensure adequate resources are provided to enable managers to implement this policy and associated guidance
- Consider and advise on university management policy and arrangements
- Be notified of any significant incident or enforcement action and ensure appropriate action is taken
- Receive regular reports of audits and/or assurance monitoring from the Health and Safety Department.

### **Health and Safety Department will**

- Ensure appropriate oversight for compliance with this policy and provide reports to University Health and Safety Committee and UEB
- Provide and keep updated, policies and guidance to ensure any statutory requirements for work-related stress are met
- Provide competent advice and support on work-related stress to the University
- In conjunction with Human Resources (HR) ensure appropriate training is made available to managers and staff
- In conjunction with HR provide competent advice on implementing this policy and support on work-related stress to the University
- Lead on and coordinate visits by external agencies, including the Health and Safety Executive

- Receive relevant data from HR relevant data regarding the effectiveness of measures to reduce work-related stress
- Receive annual assurance reports from Business Units for work-related stress.

### **Human Resources (including Occupational Health) will**

- Ensure appropriate oversight for compliance with this policy and provide reports to the University People and HR Committee
- In conjunction with the Health and Safety Department provide competent advice on implementing this policy and support on stress to the University community
- Monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating relevant data sending this to the Health and Safety Department and relevant Business Units. (e.g., Absence Records, Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Program, Engagement Survey and Stress Survey Results)
- Provide continuing support to managers and staff in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational health where appropriate
- Provide training/coaching in good management practices relating to work-related stress for Heads of Business Unit/Managers, and staff with line management responsibilities as needed
- Support managers in implementing both Business Unit and Individual stress risk assessments and action plans
- Support staff who have been off sick with work-related stress and advise them and their line manager on a planned return to work; refer to Occupational Health as required.

### **Heads of Faculty or Professional Service**

- Ensure that local management of work-related stress meets the requirements as set out in university policy and associated guidance
- Ensure that a Faculty level work-related stress action plan is completed, and actions are implemented in a timely manner.
- Consult with trade union representative any changes to work practices or work design that could lead to or increase work-related stress.
- Undertake training/coaching, as required, in good management practices relating to work-related stress
- Receive relevant data from HR regarding the effectiveness of measures to reduce work-related stress.

### **Head of Business Units and Line Managers will**

- Ensure that local management of work-related stress meets the requirements as set out in university policy and associated guidance
- Identify, within reason, all known workplace stressors within their area of responsibility
- Ensure that a Business Unit stress risk assessment and action plan is conducted, as appropriate, to identify and control the risks from work-related stress.

- Conduct Individual Stress Risk Assessments as appropriate, to identify and control the risks from work-related stress
- Consult with trade union representative any changes to work practices or work design that could lead to or increase work-related stress
- Implement actions and recommendations from work-related stress risk assessments
- Undertake training/coaching, as required, in good management practices relating to work-related stress
- Receive relevant data from HR regarding the effectiveness of measures to reduce work-related stress.

### **Health and Safety Coordinators will**

- Provide support to the Head of Business Unit and line managers in the implementation of this policy
- Provide assurance, via the BU Health and Safety Committee or where applicable, directly to senior management, that this policy is being appropriately implemented
- Undertake relevant work-related stress training
- Promote training opportunities in work-related stress awareness and signpost sources of help and support to staff.

### **Staff (Individuals) will**

- Take an active part in the process of assessing the risk, e.g., completing surveys, taking part in discussion groups and providing honest feedback when requested
- Undertake training, as requested, in work-related stress awareness
- Accept opportunities for counselling or support when recommended
- Raise issues of concern with their line manager, HR or Health and Safety Coordinator at an early stage and seek constructive solutions
- Ensure good communication with colleagues and their manager
- Engage in discussion about their performance review (Appraisal Development Conversations (ADC)) and act on feedback
- Seek and make use of the appropriate advice, support and training resources available
- Comply with employment and other HR and health and safety policies.
- Support colleagues

### **Trade Union/Staff Safety Representatives will**

- Be consulted by management on any changes to work practices or work design that could lead to or increase work-related stress
- Be able to consult with members on the issue of stress, including conducting any workplace surveys
- Be involved in the risk assessment process
- Be allowed access to collective and anonymous data from Human Resources in relation to work-related stress.

## 6. Risk Assessment

The University will take a proactive, preventative approach to managing work-related stress and in doing so will follow the HSE's Management Standards Approach.

This process, using the **Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment**, will help to identify issues at University, faculty, business unit or team levels.

However, what is a source of work-related stress for one individual may not be a source of stress for another and at different times individual employees may feel they are not able to cope with the pressures of work. In such cases, an **Individual Stress Risk Assessment** is designed to be used alongside the Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment.

### Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment

The **Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment** allows workplace stressors to be identified and controlled. Heads of Business Unit must ensure that a stress risk assessment is completed for their area. The risk assessment must consider issues across the whole Business Unit. On occasions where roles within a Business Unit differ greatly, or significant issues have been identified through other data (for a particular group of staff, team or job family) then a separate risk assessment will need to be completed for this group.

Risk assessments must be reviewed every 2 years or when there is a significant change in circumstances (such as changes to the structure, introduction of a new system, significant increase in workload).

There must be representation for input into the Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment process from across the Business Unit e.g. all job families, pay grades, functions. Roles outside of the Business Unit such as Health and Safety Department, HR, and Union representatives may also support this process.

## Undertaking a Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment:

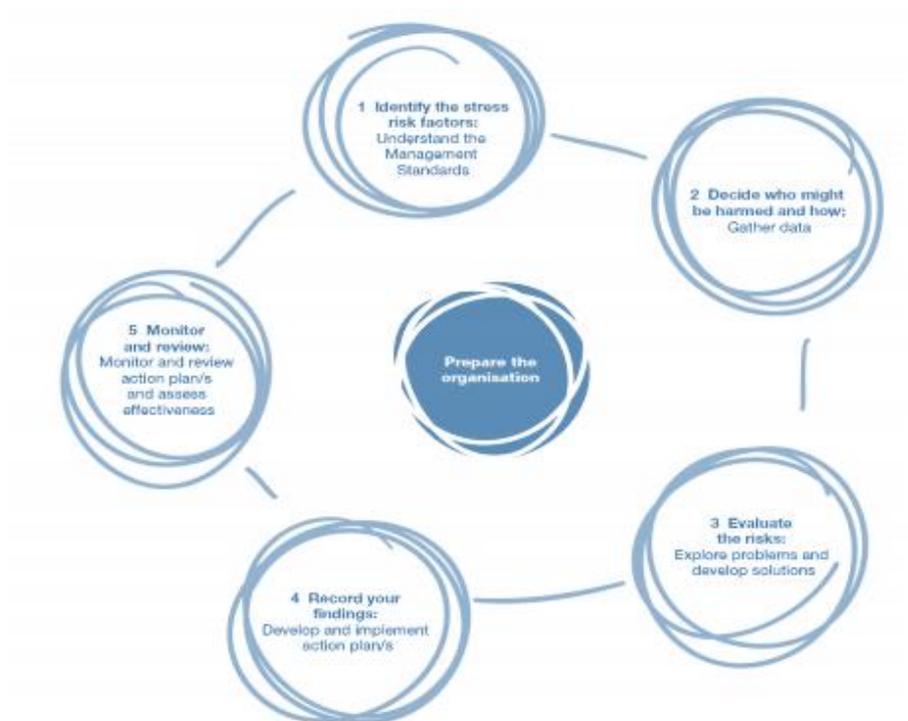


Figure 1. The Management Standards Approach

(Source: The Health and Safety Executive)

### 1 Identify the stress risk factors

This approach identifies six key 'Management Standards' that represent a set of conditions that reflect high levels of health, wellbeing and organisational performance. These standards provide a practical framework that organisations can use to minimise the impact of work-related stress. In summary the standards are concerned with:

- **Role:** Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles
- **Demands:** e.g. workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- **Control:** How much say a person has in the way they do their work
- **Support:** The encouragement, support and resources provided by the organisation, line managers and colleagues
- **Relationships:** Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Change:** How organisational change is managed and communicated

The above standards often combine, overlap and interact; they are not necessarily standalone.

### 2 Decide who might be harmed and how

Business Units should use data to identify stressors through absence reports, employee engagement surveys, employee turnover, exit interviews, ADC's, return to work interviews, complaints,

grievances, concerns raised by Trade Unions and, team meetings, occupational health referrals and other relevant measures.

At regular intervals (minimum every 3 years, maximum every 5 years), a university-wide Stress Survey will be undertaken with all staff using the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool as a measure of psychological hazard (job stressor) exposure and individual and organisational harms (using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale). Data from any such survey will help to establish whether there are links between job stressor exposures and damage to individuals' mental wellbeing as well as the health (worker engagement) of the organisation. Data must be used to inform and reflect on the Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment.

### 3 Evaluate the risks

Evaluate and discuss locally the results of gathered data using a representative sample of staff. Local focus groups or team meetings that represent the Business Unit structure in composition should be convened to confirm findings, explore what this means and discuss possible solutions.

### 4 Record your findings

Where areas of concern are identified either through the risk assessment process or following a university-wide work-related stress survey the Business Unit Stress Risk Assessment must be completed and/or updated to identify preventative measures and plan actions for implementation.

The Business Unit risk assessment includes University level control measures but requires that local preventative measures and significant actions be recorded.

Where actions are identified at a strategic/University level these must be raised and monitored through the management levels indicated in the table below using the Faculty/UEB level Action Plan

Action plans are a key part of the risk assessment process and must:

- identify an order of priority
- have sufficient resources allocated to them
- be assigned to an individual or function
- have agreed timescales for completion.

#### Responsibilities for setting and monitoring actions

Management Level	Stress Risk Assessment	Action Plan	How recorded and communicated
UEB	Not applicable	Yes – compilation of Faculty / Professional Services action plans to address common themes University wide	Published and communicated to all staff
Faculty / Professional Services	Not applicable	Yes – compilation of BU action plans into a	Published and communicated at

		Faculty / Professional Services action plan to address common themes. With actions outside of remit raised to UEB	Faculty / Professional Services level
Business Unit	Yes - Mandatory using BU Stress RA as a template	Yes – with actions outside of remit raised to Faculty or Professional Services / UEB	Communicated locally and records as per Risk Assessment Policy (SAF-POL-RA)
Group / Team / Job Family	Yes - Optional (where need identified above or specific issues reported), use BU Stress RA	Yes – with actions outside of remit raised to BU	Communicated locally and records as per Risk Assessment Policy (SAF-POL-RA)
Individual	Yes - Mandatory when need identified as per policy or when an individual returns from a period of stress-related absence	Yes – relevant to individual circumstances	Reviewed by Line Manager and Individual (HR involved as required)

## 5 Monitor and Review

The relevant management level will monitor and record progress against the action plan to ensure that the agreed actions are taken.

The relevant management level will evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions implemented and decide further actions or data gathering through ongoing management.

The relevant management level will periodically check that agreed action are being undertaken and ensure that continuous improvement is made by working with employees and other staff representatives to identify and address the problems in the workplace that could lead to their ill-health and adversely affect the performance of the University.

### Individual Stress Risk Assessment

On occasions where a manager becomes aware that an individual is suffering stress or has returned from a period of stress-related absence, the manager, in conjunction with the individual, must complete the Individual Stress Risk Assessment.

The risk assessment template is designed to help the manager in determining the exact nature of the of the individual's issues in relation to the HSE Stress Management Standards and has been developed using the HSE Talking Toolkit Template. It will support the identification of any reasonable measures that may help. The process for completing the Individual Stress Risk Assessment will vary depending on the individual circumstances, for example, whether the individual is at work or absent

from work. Completion of the form may require support from HR and in cases where there is an underlying or long-term condition, advice can be sought from Occupational Health by the referral process.

On occasions where the relationship with the line manager is considered by the employee to be part of the reason for the work-related stress, the line manager's manager can nominate an alternative manager to conduct the Individual Stress Risk Assessment.

## 7. Training

HR, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Department, will ensure that appropriate training is available to managers and staff.

### Managers

Managers are at the front line in terms of assessing, minimising, and managing the risk of work-related stress. Therefore, all managers will be required to undertake mandatory appropriate training / coaching to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement the University's policy on stress.

Such training will cover both statutory requirements such as risk assessment and focus on prevention and proactive approaches. The emphasis will be on managing their teams to encourage resilience and positive mental health and well-being rather than merely to address problems.

### Individuals

Training and information will be available to all staff in support of:

- raising their awareness of the University's Management of Work-Related Stress Policy
- ensuring their familiarity with causes of work-related stress
- informing them of internal and external resources and support they can access to self-manage
- providing an understanding of management responsibilities and how to report issues
- having an awareness and understanding of the signs and symptoms of stress

## 8. Implementation and Monitoring

The Health and Safety Department, in association with HR, will be responsible for the monitoring and review of the effectiveness of this policy through Absence Records, Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Program, Engagement Survey and Stress Survey Results and Health and Safety audits. This will be reported upon to the University Health and Safety Committee.

## 9. Incident Reporting

Where an individual believes that work-related stress has caused them to take time off work, this must be reported through the University Incident Reporting System and the appropriate level of investigation carried out in line with the Incident Reporting and Investigation arrangements (SAF-MAN-INC).

## 10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University will apply this policy to all staff and ensure that it does not cause detrimental effects to those with any of the protected characteristics.

## 11. Supporting Information

Further support can be found to assist with the implementation of this policy.

### Sources of Internal Support

- [Human Resources](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Health and Safety](#)
- [Work life Balance](#)
- [Leadership and Management Academy](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Equality & Diversity](#)
- [Sickness Absence](#)
- [University Counselling Service](#)
- [Employee Hub \(Including the Employee Assistance Programme\)](#)
- [Dignity Adviser Network](#)
- [Chaplaincy and Faith Support](#)

### Sources of External Support

- [HSE Stress Management Standards](#)
- [HSE Talking toolkit](#)
- [HSE Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool](#)
- [CIPD Stress Fact Sheets](#)
- [Mind - Wellness Action Plans](#)