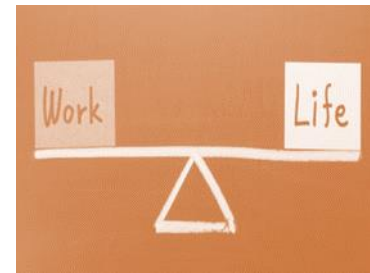


Managers guide to monitoring stress and supporting staff

This guide is in line with the university's legal responsibilities for the health and welfare of its staff. The University believes that the effective management of all staff will ensure the success of the organisation and will reduce work-related stress. Where specific work practices are identified as stressors, the university will encourage the Dean of School/Director of Service to make reasonable adjustments to reduce workplace stressors. Individuals have a legal duty to take reasonable care of their own health and that of others especially if others may be adversely affected by an individual's action. Staff are strongly encouraged to discuss, at an early stage, any stress related issues with their Dean of School/Director of Service or a member of Human Resources & Development.



This guide should be read in conjunction with the Employees' Guide to Stress Recognition and Reduction. It is intended to provide further information to managers on the causes of stress in the workplace and possible steps that can be taken to avoid stress in the workplace and the provision of staff support.

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide information to all managers about stress, its common causes and effects and to identify actions that can be taken to lessen the harmful effects of prolonged stress. A measure of stress 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 and an effective remedial action can benefit not only the individual concerned but also the workplace.

 [Line management behaviour and stress at work](#)

What is stress?

Stress is experienced when a person believes that demand is exceeding capacity to cope. Essentially, this reaction is experienced when a person finds it difficult to handle the pressures placed upon them. 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.

 [HSE guidance – line manager](#)

Key areas of causes of work related stress

All employers have a responsibility to support staff who may be suffering from stress, either work-related or otherwise. 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 the most significant contributors to workplace stress, and also an eighth factor - personal factors - that can impact on ability to cope with work pressures. This latter factor becomes particularly relevant when conducting a stress risk assessment for a specific individual. These management standards provide a practical framework which organisations can use to minimise the impact of work-related stress.

Summary of HSE Management Standards

HSE management standard	
demands	staff are able to cope with demands of job
control	staff are able to have a say about the way work is done
support	staff receive adequate information and support from colleagues and managers
relationships	staff are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours e.g. bullying or harassment at work
roles	staff understand their role and responsibilities
organisational change	staff are involved in and consulted about any organisational changes
personal factors	staff are supported with any mental and physical health; bereavement or other traumatic events; dependant(s) with ill health; financial, relationship problems etc.

The checklist, based on the HSE management standards, is intended to provide managers and staff with guidance on the practical steps they can take to identify and address potential sources of workplace stress. These standards should be considered in all strategic or work activities whether at institutional or school/service level.

Major university-wide initiatives should always include an assessment of the potential for work-related stress, and how this can be mitigated, for example, by the provision of appropriate training and support, ensuring effective and timely communication, by giving consideration to the timing of new initiatives to avoid conflicting deadlines and priorities, by ensuring the demands on staff are not otherwise excessive, and by seeking to ensure a supportive management culture. Similarly, school/service managers should have arrangements in place to identify and address potential stressors in the workplace - for example, regular review of sickness absence records/certificates, particularly those indicating stress, data on staff turnover, trends emerging from personal development reviews, and issues raised in individual and staff meetings and by local staff representatives.

Where workplace stressors need to be assessed on an individual basis, however, the HSE management standards provide a useful broad template for recognising and categorising possible stress factors, and the checklist may be a useful tool in this context.

The university is committed to improving management practice through the provision of guidance, training and support, the promotion of harassment prevention policies, as well as supporting positive initiatives such as personal development review and reward and recognition schemes to recognise and enhance individual contribution to the work of the University.

Causes of stress

There are varying sources of stress such as: family concerns; 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. Even positive events can be stressful e.g. holidays, weddings and moving house.

Typical stressors at work

physical/environmental conditions

excessive noise
uncomfortable workplace temperatures
inadequate lighting
air pollution
potentially harmful environments
lack of privacy
poorly designed equipment/workstation

cultural

poor communications
inadequate staffing levels
lack of support
inconsistent management style
too little/too much supervision
continual changes
lack of participation in workplace decision making
uncertainty about one's working future

interpersonal

social/physical isolation
poor relationships with manager /
colleagues
bullying and/or harassment
frequent changes in type of leadership
style

job content

lack of variety
repetitive or fragmented work
under-usage of skills
lack of training for type of work undertaken
implementation of new technology
conflicting demands of more than one manager

Possible solutions

The following provides a checklist that can be used to promote good management.

provide a supportive work environment

- deal with staff in a sensitive and caring fashion
- monitor staff satisfaction and wellbeing
- ensure staff are aware of individuals they can talk to about problems either within the School/Service or out with
- facilitate a team approach and good relationships between staff

work design

- do staff have clear roles and responsibilities
- are known work pressures reviewed and monitored e.g. tight deadlines, staffing levels
- are clear and concise instructions provided to staff
- try to identify jobs where stress has been or is a problem to see what can be done to reduce the risk of stress
- where possible, ensure that staff have some control of their work and that their work has variety
- do staff take proper breaks

communication

- is there clear regular two-way communication
- are there regular meetings to inform staff of events/issues
- is there the opportunity for informal discussion
- can staff discuss their concerns
- is appropriate action taken as required to deal with concerns
- are team objectives, missions etc. discussed openly with all members of the team
- do you have time for individual staff members
- do you give supportive and constructive criticism when required
- do you recognise and praise individual or group achievements, hard work and efforts
- are staff helped to prepare for proposed changes in staffing, responsibilities, work and busy periods
- do you think through the impact your actions and decisions have on the staff for whom you have responsibility

health and safety

- ensure appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken
- deal with problems in the workplace as quickly as possible
- provide a good working environment with the appropriate equipment

supporting members of staff

- 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 Human Resources & Development who may refer the individual to occupational health
- ask if there is anything as a manager you can do to help
- carry out a [stress 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, increased communication
- advise the individual about sources of help within or out with the University – see “where to get help and support”
- actively follow up an individual with stress problems and continue to demonstrate your wish to support them
- 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



Scottish Government – [online guide](#) on practical ways of dealing with stress

Where to get help and support

Internally

Occupational Health Service – You can refer to the university's [occupational health service](#) to discuss your concerns, and for further advice.

Human Resources & Development - [Human Resources & Development](#) will discuss with you and advise on how to deal with issues causing stress. [Learning & Development](#) provides a variety of courses which you may find very useful, such as bullying and harassment in the workplace; counselling skills, assertiveness training; managing sickness absence; management skills course; recognition and reduction of stress; conflict resolution; presentation skills and supervision skills.

Health & Safety -Tel: 0131 455 6377 [website](#)

Sports Centre [EN]gage - Various activities are available to help alleviate tension and reduce stress. A personal "one to one" fitness assessment can be undertaken and assistance given to find the fitness programme that is tailor-made to suit you. [\[EN\]gage website](#).

Trade Unions - General support and advice. Information on the Unions can be obtained by contacting UNISON or EIS/ULA.

Staff counselling - MCL Medics - This exists to provide a confidential, independent source of advice. Counselling may be offered by telephone or in person. [MCL Medics website](#).

Externally

General Practitioner – The GP is a good source of advice and can often recommend remedies to assist or may refer to a local support group/class.

Evening classes and leisure activities - For example, yoga, rambling, walking. Enquire at your local council for local classes.

Friends and family - Friends and family are a good source of support. Often openly expressing problems can in itself be beneficial.



NHS Inform – [Scotland's Health Information Service](#) t: 0800 22 44 88

On-line stress tool [European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#)

Managing and supporting people with mental health problems in the workplace

[Dept. of Health/HSE/Dept. for Work and Pensions](#)