



Health & Safety Stress Policy

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¹ or earlier if change in legislation or on risk assessment

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Policy Summary

Edinburgh Napier University seeks to maintain a positive and supportive working environment for all its staff. It recognises that excessive or prolonged pressure in the workplace can have a negative impact on the organisation and individuals, and that this can be prevented and alleviated through appropriate action on the part of individuals and their managers. This policy aims to establish standards for managers and staff on the prevention and management of work-related stress.

The University adopts the definition of stress used by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), namely "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them", and which draws a clear distinction between pressure which can be a motivating factor and stress which can occur when pressure becomes excessive.

The policy covers procedures and support systems currently in place in the university, details of responsibilities in relation to the management of stress within the university and measures for monitoring workplace stress. It also provides advice and information on stress-related matters and where further guidance and help can be found.

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1. Introduction

Edinburgh Napier University seeks to maintain a positive and supportive working environment for all its staff. It recognises that excessive or prolonged pressure in the workplace can have a negative impact on the organisation and individuals, and that this can be prevented and alleviated through appropriate action on the part of individuals and their managers. This policy aims to establish standards for managers and staff on the prevention and management of work-related stress.

An employee's mental health and wellbeing can be affected by a number of factors which may or may not be work-related. This Policy sets out the University's commitment and plans to reduce the impact of work-related stressors on employee health and to support those employees affected by stress.

The University accepts that stresses in the workplace can have a detrimental effect on the mental health and wellbeing of staff. It also recognises that emotional and physical wellbeing problems may be influenced by stresses in the life of members of staff caused by external factors over which the University has no control.

Mental health problems and stress can affect anyone, regardless of their position in the organisation. This policy applies equally to all employees.

The implementation of this policy will also be supported by other university policies such as sickness absence; flexible working; alcohol, drug and substance abuse; and bullying and harassment.

2. Stress definition

The University adopts the definition of stress used by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), namely "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them", and which draws a clear distinction between pressure which can be a motivating factor and stress which can occur when pressure becomes excessive.

Stress is a state, not an illness, and where stress lasts for only a short time there is usually no lasting effect. However, if the stress is sustained over a longer period it can have a significant impact on physical and mental health, work performance and morale. Reducing and preventing work-related stress therefore brings clear benefits to the University as well as to staff. The University has adopted the approach to the management and prevention of stress recommended by the HSE, which is based on the HSE's 'management standards'.

3. The HSE management standards

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

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also an additional 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.

The [Management Standards](#) are given in full and summarised below.

HSE management standard

Demands	Staff are able to cope with the demands of the 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 bullying and harassment 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.

4. Stress and the law

Edinburgh Napier University recognises its legal duty of care to staff and is committed to developing procedures and support systems which comply with its legal obligations, and which help all staff to understand and recognise the characteristics and causes of workplace stress and to take positive actions to manage stress effectively. The policy should be read in conjunction with the University's "Guide to Stress Recognition and Reduction" and the "Manager's Guide to Monitoring Stress" and other guidance provided.

The key pieces of legislation which place duties on employers in relation to stress are:

- The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act (HASAWA)
- Human Rights Act (HRA)
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (Management Regulations)
- Equality Act (EA)
- The Working Time Regulations set limits on working excessively long hours without adequate breaks and annual leave

Whilst HASAWA places general duties on employers to protect the health of employees and others from workplace hazards through a variety of measures, including provision of suitable information, instruction, training and supervision, the Management Regulations give the more specific duty to assess risk. As those suffering from work-related stress may go on to develop conditions that fall under the definition of a disability, the HRA and EA protect employees from any discrimination on the grounds of those health conditions. The Public Sector Equality Duty, enacted under the HRA, also requires HEIs, as public authorities, to prioritise action to address the most significant inequalities within their remit, including disability, and take actions that are likely to deliver the best equality outcomes.

5. Aim of policy

The university's aim is to develop a culture where the organisation, its managers and employees are committed to working together to address the occupational causes of stress and promote the positive mental health and wellbeing of all its employees. This policy lays down a framework through which we aim to:

- State the university's organisation, arrangements and procedures for the management of workplace stress.
- Reduce the risk of workplace stress through development of good working practices, based on the HSE Management Standards.
- Provide support for staff with management and supervisory responsibilities, to enable them to develop their management competence and support employees who experience stress.
- Support and help employees to manage their own stress and support them to return to, and remain in, work.
- To promote equality of opportunity, and provide a workplace free from harassment and bullying.
- To foster effective workload allocation and feedback on performance.

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- To promote good communication throughout the university.
- To provide information and training to enable staff to develop their skills and maximise their contribution to the success of the university.
- To ensure effective and timely consultation with staff representatives (staff representatives include trade union representatives, safety representatives and staff representatives serving on consultative bodies) on proposed actions relating to the prevention of work-related stress.
- To provide appropriate employee support services.

6. Policy statement

The University is committed via this policy and other guidance to establishing an effective and consistent approach to the prevention of work-related stress throughout the University and to provide supporting services where cases of stress are identified. This will be achieved through the following:

- Identifying university school/service workplace stressors and carrying out [stress risk assessments](#) to eliminate or control the risks from stress.
- Providing appropriate mental health training for all managers and staff.
- Establishing arrangements and procedures for the early identification and dealing with cases of stress.
- Providing a confidential counselling service to support staff in managing personal stress levels – [MCL Medics](#).
- Providing sensitive and planned management of return to work, following sickness absence.
- Promoting partnerships between management, individuals and the recognised trade unions, with the aim of reducing stress in the workplace and the promotion of a positive mental health and wellbeing culture.
- Develop action plans, in consultation with staff and staff representatives.

7. Procedures and support systems currently in place

- [Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [Staff development](#)
- HR&D stress action plan
- Health and wellbeing activities
- Management referral: [Occupational Health Service](#)
- [Flexible working](#)
- Engagement/stress survey, [stress risk assessment](#) process
- Guidance and information on your [work environment](#)
- [Human Resource Policies](#)
- [Health and Safety Policies](#)

8. University publications relating to university stress management

- Stress Management Policy
- Managers' Guide to Monitoring Stress
- An employee Guide to Stress Recognition and Reduction
- Website information – [stress management](#)

9. Other relevant university policies and procedures

- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Grievances Procedures](#)
- [Managing Sickness Absence](#)
- [Alcohol & Substance Abuse](#)
- [Employee Support](#)
- [Equal Opportunities](#)
- [Flexible Working](#)
- [Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures](#)

10. Advice and information on stress-related matters

All members of staff are encouraged to discuss with their line manager or contact [Human Resources & Development](#), the Occupational Health Service or the employee assistance programme for confidential information and advice on any stress related matter.

Other relevant support measures

- Provision of exercise and leisure programmes for staff at [\[EN\]gage sports centre](#) and other venues
- Provision of healthy food choices
- Health and wellbeing opportunities
- Alternative therapy treatments

Staff development

The university provides a variety of opportunities for [staff development](#) and provides a variety of courses which you may find very useful.

11. Responsibilities

The university

The university will publish and issue its Stress Management Policy along with associated guidance leaflets and website links and ensure that these documents are brought to the attention of all staff.

University Leadership Team (ULT)

- Identifying where strategic decisions may impact on employees and ensure measures are in place to manage the changes and support staff.
- Take action to address occupational stress factors that are strategic in nature, identified through the staff engagement survey and school/service stress risk assessments relevant data i.e. sickness absence, staff turnover etc.
- Provide adequate resources to enable the effective management of people and to implement the Stress Management Policy.

Deans of School and Directors of Service

Deans of School/Directors of Service are responsible for implementing the University Stress Management Policy. Deans/Directors are also responsible for ensuring that reasonably practicable steps are taken to minimise the potential for exacerbating risks arising from occupational stress. This should be undertaken by identifying significant sources of workplace stress and producing written stress risk assessments, including action plans with control measures, to eliminate or control such stressors. This should also be undertaken by developing good communications and by fostering an open and supportive environment where issues such as stress and mental health can be discussed.

Managers

Managers play an important role in facilitating and supporting staff to carry out their jobs effectively and to contribute to the success of their school/service and of the university. Managers at all levels are responsible for contributing to the overall management of stress in their school or service, and are expected to:

- Take steps to ensure their management practices and style do not contribute to occupational stress. (Managers can assess their competency by using the [HSE's Stress Management Competency indicator tool](#).)
- Identify and respond appropriately to stress issues within their team. This includes:
 - addressing potential stressors (e.g. planned changes to working practices)
 - taking action when they notice changes in staff behaviour or sickness absence patterns that may indicate a stress-related problem
- Proactively manage employee absence to enable early and effective rehabilitation.
- Ensure the managers that they are responsible for are meeting their management responsibilities in relation to stress.
- Create a supportive culture where stress is discussed and reviewed as a normal component of the management of day-to-day activities and staff members feel secure enough to raise stress-related issues affecting their health without fear of stigma.
- Ensure good communications, particularly where there are organisational or procedural changes.
- Ensure that jobs are properly designed, with realistic demands and workload, and that expectations and job role are clear.

- Enable staff to work as flexibly as is reasonably practicable, in order to be able to balance their work, external responsibilities and leisure.
- Ensure that staff are trained to undertake the demands of their job and are able to contribute to decisions about how the job is done.
- Ensure that there are regular opportunities to discuss the work and obtain feedback on performance, e.g. regular one-to-one meetings and/or team meetings.
- Monitor working hours and holidays to ensure that staff are not overworking and are taking appropriate breaks.
- Identify or respond to issues of concern promptly and seek constructive solutions.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful training and development opportunities.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Be alert to signs of problems and offer additional support to any member of staff who is known to be experiencing stress.
- Seek advice and support at an early stage from Human Resources & Development if difficulties arise.
- Assist and support employees who are known to have mental health problems or are experiencing stress outside work – for example due to bereavement or separation.

Employees

It is essential that staff play an active role in contributing to their own wellbeing and development, as well as to the success of the school/service and university, by using the resources available to carry out their role effectively. In order to minimise the risk of work-related stress, staff should:

- Be aware of the factors that may contribute to their stress and actions that they can take to improve their health and wellbeing.
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>
- Bring to the attention of their manager any concerns they have about work-related pressures and stress.
- Inform their manager promptly if they feel they are suffering from stress, or have concerns about other team members.
- Work with their manager to identify work adjustments to address their personal stress and/or work pressures within the team.
- Individual members of staff should be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress, and if they believe that they are suffering from stress should seek help from their line manager, Human Resources & Development or occupational health service, or use the employee assistance programme.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended. An [employee assistance programme](#) is provided which exists to provide a confidential, independent source of advice. Counselling may be offered by telephone or in person.

Employees should refer to the employees guide and information on support and training available.

Human Resources & Development and Occupational Health

- Provide advice and support to employees and managers in relation to this policy.
- Monitor and report on levels of sickness absence which relate to mental health problems including stress-related illness (in conjunction with the occupational health service and school/service managers).

- Support individuals who have been off sick with mental health and stress problems, and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Refer individuals to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures for workplace stress through sickness absence etc. and, when deemed necessary, take appropriate action through the relevant Dean of School/Director of Service to ensure that workplace stressors are eliminated or controlled.

Health & Safety

- Ensure compliance with this policy.
- Ensure that it is included in the annual school/service reports, health and safety reviews and audits.
- Measure, monitor and review the implementation of this policy, so that the university can achieve continuous improvement.

University Health & Safety Committee

The University Health and Safety Committee will:

- Oversee the application of this policy and other measures which have been implemented to eliminate or reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.
- Perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- Oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

12. Monitoring and review

Measures for monitoring workplace stress

- Managers are required to be alert to the signs and symptoms of stress in staff under their control.
- Members of staff should be alert to the signs and symptoms of stress in themselves and their colleagues.
- Human Resources & Development and the occupational health service meet periodically to review sickness absenteeism and in particular cases where absences are stress related.
- Other appropriate measures, as and when they arise, such as the staff engagement surveys and reports received from the local trade unions etc.
- School/Services should identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress within their area. These risk assessments should be regularly reviewed.

The University will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy by the following means:

- Human Resources & Development, in conjunction with the occupational health service and Health and Safety, will annually review the operation of this policy and monitor how effectively the policy meets its aims and objectives in the light of data which should be collected for this purpose.

- This will include data on the incidence of work-related stress, sickness absence, complaints of harassment or bullying and staff turnover, exit interviews and employee engagement staff survey.
- Information will also be gathered about interventions such as counselling, training, etc.
- Feedback will be sought from school/service managers and following consultation with staff representatives, taking account also of advice available at the time from such sources as the HSE.

Such monitoring will be fully reported for the Health and Safety Committee.

The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains relevant.

13. Further information and guidance

The university's website provides key information about stress, what it is, and how to prevent or manage it, as well as providing links through to other support services and a range of external resources.

[HSE guidance on work related stress](#)

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

[European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#) – managing stress and psychosocial risk E guide

[Healthy Working Lives](#) - detailed advice and support

[See Me](#)

[Equality & Human Rights Commission](#) - Mental health is your business

[Stress Management resources and links](#) – Edinburgh Napier University