



Policy on Managing Stress at Work

2018-2021

Policy reviewed by the Health and Safety Committee

1. Introduction

This policy applies to all employees in the University. The policy establishes standards for managers and staff on the prevention of work related stress and provides information in relation to supporting the implementation of these standards. The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Health and Safety Committee. The Health and Safety Committee will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented and will oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

A review of its effectiveness will be carried out annually using information obtained through Health and Safety audits and absence monitoring. The Health and Safety team will be responsible for monitoring and review of this policy.

The policy references good practice outlined in Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance. The HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them'. This makes a distinction between 'pressure', which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and 'stress' which can be detrimental to health.

2. Information about Stress

A stress response occurs when the actual or perceived pressures on an individual are greater than their ability to cope. We all experience periods of pressure in life and work, and short periods of pressure are not necessarily of concern. However, when pressure is sustained and/or excessive, without the opportunity to recover, this may lead to emotional or physical problems. It is important to recognise the types of pressures that might contribute to feelings of stress in yourself or others and the signs that all may not be well. Pressures might come from:

Personal life:

- Ill-health
- Relationships
- Family problems
- Home environment
- Neighbour disputes
- Financial difficulties

Work life:

- Lack of control over the way work is done
- Too much or insufficient work
- Role conflict or lack of role definition
- Underused skills
- Unsatisfactory relationships
- Lack of support from colleagues
- Lack of feedback
- Lack of clarity about expectations
- Lack of information

The way an individual responds to pressure can be influenced by their personality type, coping skills and the support systems they have in place. Being self-aware can help to identify where extra support and personal development can help in moderating the effects of pressure. Recognition of a problem means that appropriate coping mechanisms and support can be sought at an early stage, before negative effects lead to emotional or physical difficulties. Signs that a person may be having problems can include:

Symptoms:

- Constant tiredness
- Frequent headaches or other aches and pains
- Poor concentration
- Loss of confidence
- Irritability
- Tearfulness
- Poor sleep

Behaviours:

- Indecisiveness
- Poor time keeping
- Poor performance
- Unusual absence
- Poor judgement
- Inappropriate humour
- Withdrawal
- Increase/decrease eating
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine

More information about sources of help and support can be found on the Human Resources page under 'health and wellbeing' and staff are encouraged to discuss any concerns that they might have with their line manager and/or a Human Resources Officer.

3. Prevention of Work Related Stress

The University recognises that it has a duty of care towards its staff and a legal obligation to provide a safe working environment and to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that staff work in an environment with safe systems of work, by:

- providing a workplace free from harassment and victimisation;
- developing sound management practice based on equality of treatment;
- providing a framework of employment, health, safety and security policies and systems to support managers and staff in minimising the risk of work-related stress;
- effective workload allocation and feedback on performance;
- ensuring good communication throughout the University;
- providing information and training to enable staff to develop their skills and maximise their contribution to the success of the University;
- providing appropriate employee support services including confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by work and/or external factors.
- Will conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risk from stress in the workplace.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Managers

It is essential that managers have an active role in facilitating and supporting staff to do their job effectively and to contribute to the success of the department and the University. In order to minimise the risk of work-related stress, managers should:

- ensure good communication, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;
- ensure jobs are designed to avoid conflicting demands and that expectations and the job role are clear;
- monitor workloads, working hours and overtime to ensure that people are not overloaded;
- monitor annual leave arrangements to ensure that staff are taking their entitlement;
- ensure staff are fully trained to undertake the demands of their job and are able to contribute to decisions about how the job is done;
- ensure there are regular opportunities for feedback on performance e.g. annual PRDP reviews, 'one to one' meetings and team meetings;
- identify or respond to issues of concern promptly and seek constructive solutions;
- make use of the support and training resources available;
- ensure staff are provided with meaningful training and developmental opportunities;
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated;
- be aware of signs of problems and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation;
- comply with University policies on health, safety and security;
- seek appropriate advice and support at an early stage if difficulties arise; and
- conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction.

4.2 Employees

All 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. Employees play an active role in contributing to their own development, the success of the department and the University, and should utilise the resources and support available to carry out their role effectively in order to minimise the risk of work-related stress. Any issues of concern should be raised as soon as possible with line managers and/or a Human Resources Officer, and staff should accept opportunities for support and help, which may include training, confidential counselling or referral to Occupational Health when recommended. Employees should:

- ensure good communication with colleagues and their manager;
- support colleagues by providing appropriate information and by sharing knowledge and resources where appropriate;
- engage in discussion about their performance and act on feedback;
- raise issues of concern at an early stage and seek constructive solutions;
- make use of the support and training resources available;
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated;
- comply with University policies and policies on health, safety and security;
- seek appropriate advice and support at an early stage if difficulties arise.

4.3 Health and Safety

The Health and Safety team are responsible for:

- training and supporting managers in implementing stress risk assessments;
- providing and/or facilitating awareness training on stress, supported by the staff development team;
- monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures for reducing stress;
- informing the Health and Safety Committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

4.4 Human Resources

The Human Resources team:

- facilitates awareness training on health and wellbeing and the management of stress – development sessions are included in the Staff Development Programme and will be arranged as required;
- monitors the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating and reviewing sickness absence statistics;
- provides support to staff on a one-to-one basis which may include referral to Occupational Health or the University's Lead Counsellor, where appropriate.

5. Risk Assessment and Risk Management

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified six key 'Management Standards' that represent a set of conditions that reflect high levels of health, wellbeing and organisational performance. The HSE Management Standards provide a practical framework that the University will use to minimise the impact of work-related stress. Details are provided in full in **Appendix 1**. In summary the standards are concerned with:

Role: whether people understand their role within the University and whether the University ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles

Demands: for example, this might include 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 University, line managers and colleagues.

Relationships: promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Change: how organisational change is managed and communicated.

A checklist in **Appendix 2** has been developed, using the HSE standards, to provide managers and staff with guidance on the practical steps they can take to identify potential sources of pressure and avoid or address the risk of stress at work.

There are various sources of support that assist in the implementation of this policy including:

- Advice from the Health and Safety team: A.Canning@chi.ac.uk or J.Corrie@chi.ac.uk, or K.Hickman@chi.ac.uk
- Advice from a Human Resources Officer: HR@chi.ac.uk. The team may refer to Occupational Health or the University's Lead Counsellor, where appropriate.
- Staff development events supporting health and wellbeing and/or to support development to undertake jobs effectively and to develop new skills to meet changing demands: K.Botto@chi.ac.uk or E.Whitaker@chi.ac.uk.
- Union Representatives (UCU and UNISON) have a key role to play in supporting staff welfare.
- Health and Safety Co-ordinators – Communicate departmental risk assessments and action plans at department meetings.

Appendix 1

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards

Standard 1: Demands: includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

The standard to aim for is:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The University provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours and pattern of working;
- Skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

University policies and guidance that support the achievement of Standard 1 include:

- ✓ Guidance on Health and Wellbeing
- ✓ Flexible Working Policy
- ✓ Performance Review Development Plan (PRDP) Scheme
- ✓ Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure (including the procedure for dealing with Bullying and Harassment)
- ✓ Guidance on Dealing with Capability and Performance
- ✓ Guidance on the operation of the Probationary Scheme
- ✓ Induction and mentoring
- ✓ Grievance Policy and Procedure
- ✓ Employee Handbook
- ✓ Staff Development Programme

Standard 2: Control: how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

The standard to aim for is:

- Employees indicate 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.

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- The University encourages employees to develop their skills;
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

University policies and procedures that support the achievement of Standard 2 include:

Those outlined under Standard 1 and 2, including

- Outcomes of stress survey

Standard 3: Support: includes the encouragement, support and resources provided by the University, line managers and colleagues.

The standard to aim for is:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The University has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

University policies and procedures that support the achievement of Standard 3:

Those outlined under Standard 1, 2 and 3,

Standard 4: Relationships: includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour.

The standard to aim for is:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The University promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The University has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

University policies and procedures that support the achievement of Standard 4 include:

Those indicated under Standards 1, 2 and 3, including

- ✓ Equality and Diversity Policy
- ✓ Religion and Belief Policy
- ✓ Sexual Orientation Policy
- ✓ Equality Scheme
- ✓ Policy on Consensual Relations
- ✓ Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- ✓ University and College Mediation Service

Standard 5: Role: whether people understand their role within the University and whether the University ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The standard to aim for is:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The University ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- The University provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
- The University ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

University policies and procedures that support the achievement of Standard 5 include:

The documents outlined in Standards 1 to 4, including

- ✓ Recruitment Guidelines, including Job Profiles
- ✓ University Reward Strategy
- ✓ Guidance on promotion to Professor, Reader and Teaching Fellow

Standard 6: Change: how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The standard to aim for is:

- Employees indicate that the University engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The University provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;
- The University ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes;
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

University policies and procedures that support the achievement of Standard 6 include:

- ✓ Consultation through department and one-to-one meetings with line managers
- ✓ Policy and Procedure for dealing with Organisational Change
- ✓ Information available on 'University news' on Portia

Appendix 2

Managing Stress at Work Risk Assessment

The University has a duty of care towards its staff and a legal obligation to provide a safe working environment. A risk assessment will help to provide managers and staff with guidance on the practical steps they can take to avoid or address workplace issues that might have an adverse effect on health and performance. The risk assessment will help to identify reasonable adjustments that could be implemented to reduce the risk of adverse effects and/or sources of practical and emotional support at work. With guidance from the Health and Safety Officer, and via this checklist, the following steps will assist in the completion of risk assessments.

There are five steps to any risk assessment:

1. Identify the hazards that cause stress as explained in the HSE Standards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Assess the risk and decide if it is currently causing stress
4. Record the findings and decide on any action required to eliminate or reduce stress in the risk assessment
5. Review the assessment as required, to ensure control measures are working

Identifying the hazards relating to managing stress at work:

The key work related factors with potential to cause stress related illness (the risk) in the University are:

- Demands of the job
- Control of work environment
- Support
- Relationships within the workplace
- Role within organisation
- Management of change

Decide who might be harmed and how:

Some people may be more vulnerable to developing work related stress illness than others. In particular those who:

- have a history of significant or physical health problems
- have been absent from work due to work-related stress or difficulties with coping in the past
- have personal difficulties which may be unrelated to work
- are inexperienced in their role
- are of a personality type which tends towards over work or being unable to cope with pressure.

Staff may be aware of some of additional factors which will need to be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Training will be provided for managers in relation to completing risk assessments with advice provided on how to assess risks and the actions that may be put in place to manage potential risks/risks.

A risk assessment form is attached as Appendix 3.

Appendix 3: Stress Risk Assessment form

ASSESSING OUR RISKS – STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT				Risk Assessment Ref: /000					
Department and Campus:			Probability/ Severity	Minor injury	Lost time/ill health	Major / >3 days	Perm Disabi- lity	Fatal/ Site Loss	
Stress Risk Assessment for task/activity/area:			Highly Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	
Notes:			Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10	
Risk Assessment completed by: e.g. Manager, Supervisor, EHS Officer, H&S Co-ordinator, Employee		Date of RA:	Review Date:	Possible	3	6	9	12	15
People at risk: Staff, Students, Contractors			Probable	4	8	12	16	20	
Department Manager (Print Name):		Signature:		Certain	5	10	15	20	25

Ref No. or Task-Step	Hazards identified by causes, highlighting risks	Score - no controls	Controls/Procedures/Key Behaviours(existing controls, information, training, etc)	Score - Post Controls	Further action required	Score - Post Action	Post action Completion Date	Signed off by
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DEMANDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long hours • Excessively busy periods • Inadequate rest and holidays • Inadequate staffing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at job design and working practices • Check all leave is being taken • Is work being taken home? • Is there constant communication during off-duty time by e-mail, text and phone? • Cut out unnecessary work and communications • Review workloads and resources (including staffing levels), and allow sufficient time for individuals to plan their work • Schedule work in a way that allows recovery time after unavoidable busy periods 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriately qualified for the job • Over promotion • Skills not recognised – promotion prospects not fulfilled 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure individuals are matched to jobs – people can be over and under qualified • Analyse skills alongside the tasks • Provide training for those who need more, e.g. when introducing new technology • Review and consider selection, skill criteria, job summaries, training and supervision • Career planning discussion, training needs evaluation • Monitor workplace policies in practice: discrimination 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring or repetitive work • Too little to do 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job enrichment/job rotation/role review • Consider changing the way jobs are done by moving people between jobs, giving individuals more responsibility, increasing the scope of the job, increasing the variety of tasks, or giving a group of workers greater responsibility for effective performance of the group 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees experiencing excessive workloads • Employees working under excessive pressure 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review workload and demands regularly and as an integral part of the PDR and performance management process • Support staff in planning and prioritising their work. Try to establish what aspects of their job they find challenging. Redistribute work or set different work priorities if they are not coping • Check management skills and assess training needs 					
	<p>The physical working environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor temperature control • noise • lack of facilities for rest/breaks • poor lighting • poor ventilation • badly placed or designed workstations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure workplace hazards are properly controlled • Undertake risk assessments of workspace and significant tasks 					
	<p>The psychological working environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threat of aggression or violence • verbal abuse • poor management practices 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report violence to line manager or other appropriate person. Use accident/incident form. • Assess risks, implement controls including investigation of complaints and appropriate training • Monitor absence levels and trends. Compare with other departments, other businesses • Look at the individual and any risk factors that apply to this particular person 					

CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not being able to balance the demands of work and life outside work 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage a healthy work-life balance Ensure staff distribute holidays across the year Develop a communications protocol that ensures people have rest time completely free of all work-related messages. Over-anxious people often need to be in constant contact. Over-controlling management tends not to respect off-duty time 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigid work patterns and breaks Fixed deadlines occurring in different parts of the year Lack of control over work 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to provide some scope for varying working conditions and flexible work schedules (e.g. flexible working hours, working from home) Consult with people to allow them to influence the way their jobs are done, what the real deadlines are and what the priorities are 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicting work demands 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set realistic deadlines for tasks Take into account that individuals are different, and try to allocate work so that everyone is working in the way that helps them work best, takes account of their home obligations and makes best use of their skills Be clear about tasks required 					
SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to work system Sickness and absence management Managerial support through emotionally demanding work 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and systems in place, monitored and consistently applied Measure trends and changes Investigate variations Check management skills and assess training needs Ensure people have the support they require and access to any specialist advice Advise staff about counselling service 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inductions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff transferring or promoted or returning to work after long absence also to be inducted • Special attention for young people as required • OH/HR support • DDA adjustments in place, reviewed and checked New staff properly inducted, existing 					
	Post disciplinary, grievance or suspension		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support staff as appropriate and in line with ACAS good practice 					
WORK RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor relationships with others • Staff complaints or rising absence trends 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate causal factors • Provide training in interpersonal skills, non-discriminatory rules and workplace conduct standards • Discuss the problem openly with individuals • Follow complaint procedures • Check management skills and assess training needs 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying or confrontational communications styles 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage constructive and positive communications between staff • Managers should discuss and address bullying and/or confrontational communication styles with member of staff who display these behaviours • Consider training and policy guidance 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying, racial or sexual harassment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to guidance on Bullying & Harassment • Practise by example and make it clear what behaviours are not acceptable • Provide details of any empirical evidence: absence trends, complaints, etc. 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of support or fear culture within from management and co-workers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encourage staff, protect them from reprisals Consider introducing a mentoring and counselling scheme Investigate and take action as appropriate as soon as possible 					
ROLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear lines of accountability and responsibility 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure employees have a recent PDR to clarify roles and responsibilities Ensure individuals are provided with appropriate information that sets out their roles and responsibilities Make it clear to staff that management will try to ensure that their problems will be handled sensitively and at the appropriate level of management 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of communication and consultation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure communication lines for discussing issues with roles and responsibilities are clearly defined Communicate how role fits into University strategic aims Aim for good communication and close employee involvement, particularly during periods of change or high pressure 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A culture of blame when things go wrong, denial of potential problems Failure to recognise success 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be honest, set a good example, and listen to and respect others Acknowledge and reward successes 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A culture that considers stress a sign of weakness 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approachable management which wants to know about problems and will try to help to resolve them 					

CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears about job security / grading • Poor communication – uncertainty about what is happening • Not enough time allowed to implement change • Inexperience/fear of new technology • Lack of skills for new tasks • Not enough resource allocated for change process • Other personal fears, relocation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide effective support for staff throughout the process • Consult with staff likely to be involved in a change of management programme – fear and uncertainty can lead to increased anxiety, unfounded gossip, poor employment relationships and increased absence • Getting together as a team can help people to feel less isolated with their concerns • Ensure effective two-way communication throughout process – knowing exactly what is going to happen when can help people feel less anxious about a change • Consider training needs – do people have the tools and skills to effect change? • Consider changes in teams or work environment – a small change, e.g. a different positioning of desks, can have a major impact on communication and work relationships to help people not to feel isolated 					

REVIEWED BY:

NAME / JOB TITLE / DATE