

Policy

Title: STRESS MANAGEMENT

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1. Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define 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 a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

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 organisation as well as to employees.

2. Policy

The University recognises that it has a duty of care towards its staff and a legal obligation to provide a safe working environment. Ignoring cases of work-related stress may have serious implications both for staff and for the University. The University aims to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that staff work in a positive, safe, and supportive working environment by seeking to:

- Promote a healthy work-life balance;
- Promote best practice management;
- Provide a framework of employment, health and safety policies and timely and relevant monitoring mechanisms to support managers and staff to ensure effective work performance and to minimise the risk of work-related stress;
- Provide advice and information to staff about stress in order to promote preventative measures and ensure early intervention in cases of work-related stress;
- Promote and embrace diversity in order to provide a workplace free of harassment and bullying;
- Foster effective workload allocation and a culture of constructive feedback on performance;
- Promote effective, all-inclusive communication throughout the University;
- Provide effective and relevant information and training to enable staff to develop their skills and maximize their contribution to the University;
- Ensure effective and timely communication and consultation with the relevant trade unions on proposed actions relating to the prevention of work-related stress;
- Provide appropriate and effective employee support services.

3. Line Manager Responsibilities

- To understand what work-related stress is, what causes it and how it can be prevented and managed.
- To ensure effective communication with staff regarding work-related stress and raise awareness.
- Be aware of and implement where appropriate the relevant University policies and procedures on this issue.
- Ensure that there are regular opportunities for staff to discuss the work and obtain feedback on performance, e.g. regular one-to-one and/or team meetings, annual PPDR.
- Monitor the working hours and holidays of your team to ensure staff are not overworking and are taking appropriate breaks.
- To identify potential causes of stress before they escalate into a problem and respond rapidly and seek constructive solutions.

- To record any discussions with staff in which they indicate that they are experiencing work-related stress.
- To seek advice from HR at an early stage if difficulties arise.
- Be aware of the University's support services that are available and promote these among your team.
- Be aware of and use where appropriate the staff support services that are available.
- To be key in assisting staff returning to work to ensure that the return is both successful and sustainable.

4. Employee Responsibilities

- To understand what work-related stress is, what causes it and how it can be prevented and managed.
- To raise awareness between you and your colleagues and assist in breaking down the stigma attached.
- Be aware of the relevant University policies and procedures on this issue.
- To identify potential causes of stress before they become an issue and raise this with the relevant people at the earliest opportunity.
- Be aware of your colleagues in terms of behaviours and identifying potential symptoms of stress and raise this with the appropriate person as necessary.
- To help facilitate a successful return to work, to work with your line manager in terms of assisting with identifying solutions.

Confidentiality

The University shall seek to ensure that, where appropriate, confidentiality is maintained. However, this shall not prevent the University from disclosing information where necessary to protect your welfare, for the discharge of duties or as required by law, e.g. where it is considered that there is an unacceptable risk to you or others. Such a risk might include where there is a chance of physical/mental harm to you or another.

Trade Unions

The University of Southampton recognises that Trade Unions have a positive role to play in all areas of health and safety, including work related stress. The University welcomes the part played by the Trade Unions in the development of this policy and the part it will continue to play in the monitoring of progress.

Related policies and procedures

The managing stress policy is supported by a number of existing University policies and procedures which are outlined below:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Sickness & Absence Policy
- Dignity at Work & Study Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment Guide
- Capability Procedures
- Work-life balance policies and procedures including: parental leave, flexible working policy, career break, job share, voluntary reduced hours, compassionate and domestic incidents leave, carers information pack
- The Equality Plan
- Incapacity on Health Grounds

The University has a number of other employment policies and procedures including procedures for dealing with disciplinary matters and grievances. Nothing in this policy should prevent or delay the operation of other relevant procedures, where they should be invoked.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Human Resources, with the support from the Health and Safety Committee, will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented, regularly reviewed with the collation of appropriate data and will

oversee monitoring of the efficacy of this policy and the measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

Ownership of the policy

Human Resources has led on the development of the policy and will review regularly. The effective implementation is the responsibility of University Managers and Supervisors.