

University of Aberdeen

POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF WORK RELATED STRESS

Introduction

The University of Aberdeen is committed to the health, safety and welfare of all its employees and to providing a healthy and safe working environment.

Work related stress is a health and safety issue and we acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing factors that may cause work related stress. We also acknowledge the importance of providing timely information to, and working collaboratively with Trade Unions on identifying and dealing with work related stress factors which give rise to health or safety risk

This policy will apply to all staff of the University. The University is responsible for providing the necessary resources for its implementation and the Senior Management Team and Line Managers are responsible for the successful implementation and ongoing support of this Policy.

Definitions

Stress - The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".

Hazard – An activity, process or substance which has the potential to injure or cause harm to an individual

Risk - The probability of somebody being harmed by the hazard and how serious the harm could be

Risk assessment - The process of identifying hazards, evaluating the risk from the hazards, deciding upon and implementing appropriate controls to reduce the risk

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the University of Aberdeen to take all reasonable and practicable steps to safeguard the health and safety of our employees while at work. We recognise that excessive levels of stress, especially if endured for long periods may lead to ill health. Harmful levels of stress can arise as a result of factors both within the workplace and from employees' personal and family lives. Whilst we recognise that we have no control over external factors, our objectives as an employer committed to effectively managing stress at work are to:

- Identify hazards or sources of harmful levels of stress and carry out work related stress risk assessments;
- Prevent, as far as is reasonable and practicable, employees being exposed to harmful levels of stress at work;
- Consult and work with the Trade Unions on work related stress risks and control measures;

- Enable managers, supervisors and individual employees to recognise, at an early stage, symptoms which might be related to harmful levels of stress;
- Provide support for those who are suffering ill health due to work related stress and provide assistance to enable employees to recover their full potential as soon as possible.

The University recognises that a policy on work related stress cannot sit in isolation. It must be underpinned by other policies designed to mitigate employee stress, and regular proactive and reactive risk assessment scaled as appropriate across the institution

HSE Management Standards

The HSE has developed six Management Standards to help assess and tackle the main causes of stress. The standards focus on six aspects of work as follows:

1. Demands – Includes issues such as workload, work pattern and the work environment.
2. Control – How much autonomy/input the person has in the way they do their work.
3. Support – Includes the encouragement and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
4. Relationships – Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
5. Role – Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.
6. Change – How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The University commits to using the HSE Management Standards within the institution to help identify sources of harmful levels of stress at work with a view to minimising the likelihood of stress (through risk assessments) and dealing with individual cases which arise. For more information on the HSE's Management Standards go to; www.hse.gov.uk/stress

Risk assessments

The University commits to regular risk assessments to mitigate stress. Such assessments can be proactive (eg workload, ahead of major change or at scale) or reactive (in response to specific issues raised by individuals and groups). Staff and related surveys will be carried out as part of the ongoing programme of feedback and engagement. Work related Stress Risk Assessments Statistical data from the Occupational Health Service and sickness absence trends may also contribute to the risk assessment process. No individual will be identifiable in this process. Information gathered in these ways will be used to identify areas for detailed assessment and implementing controls or improvement. Focus groups will be used as per HSE guidance to provide qualitative data to complement the quantitative information gathered via surveys. Action plans will be implemented by those responsible as outlined below. The University will consult with the trade unions in assessing risk and using appropriate controls.

The University will attempt to collate anonymised records of incidence of work related stress and report annual figures in order to document scale and track trends across time in order to inform action to reduce work related stress.

Training and development

An awareness of the symptoms of stress and learning how to recognise and reduce individual stress levels will be incorporated into staff training where appropriate. Training will also be provided for Senior Management and Line Managers, focusing on minimising the likelihood of stress (using the HSE's Management Standards) and providing advice on dealing with individual stress cases.

Responsibilities

The University as the employer has duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to carry out risk assessments and provide safe systems of work to ensure the risks associated with stress at work are managed and controlled. The University as the Employer will discharge its duties through the line management structure by allocating the following specific responsibilities

Principal, Senior/Vice Principals and University Secretary

Principal has the overarching responsibility for health and safety at work and along with the Senior/Vice Principals and the University Secretary provides leadership in matters of health, safety and wellbeing. This includes defining goals, objectives and expectations in matters of work related stress, in particular to:

- Ensure that this Policy is implemented appropriately throughout the University;
- Ensure that the University management teams are provided with adequate resources including training to deal with issues arising from work related stress risk assessments; and
- Ensure that health, safety and wellbeing including work related stress is reported and reviewed at the Senior Management Team meetings.
- Ensure that staff understand they have a right to work in a safe environment and access support
- Ensure that staff understand that seeking help and support is seen as a positive, to be encouraged and handled without censure.

Heads of Schools, Heads of Professional Services and Line Managers

In line with the requirements of the University Health, Wellbeing and Safety Policy, the responsibilities of Heads of Schools, Heads of Professional Services and Line Managers on the management of work related stress are to:

- Implement the University Policy on Managing Work Related Stress;
 - Maintain and encourage a healthy, safe and supportive working environment for all staff;
 - Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their areas of control;
 - Ensure effective communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;
 - Ensure staff in their areas are appropriately informed and trained to discharge their duties;
 - Ensure staff are provided with appropriate personal developmental opportunities;
 - Monitor workloads of staff to ensure that workloads are not excessive;
 - Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not working excessive hours;
 - Monitor annual leave patterns to ensure that staff have the opportunity to take their full entitlement;
 - Attend training in good management practice and health and safety;
 - Ensure that the Staffing Policy Against Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace is implemented and bullying and harassment is not tolerated in their areas; and
 - Ensure that any work related stress issue raised by a member of their staff is investigated and matter resolved within a reasonable period of time;
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- Remain vigilant to and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside of work e.g. bereavement or separation.

Central Health and Safety Team

- Assist with the training and support of managers in implementing stress risk assessments and findings.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.
Inform the University and the University Health and Safety Committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.
- Work in partnership with trade unions health and safety reps as per HSE guidance

Human Resources

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress at work.
- Provide guidance to managers on the Policy on the Management of Work Related Stress;
- Support individuals who have been absent from work due to stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work;
- Refer individuals who indicate they are stressed to Occupational Health Counselling Service as required;
- Support the monitoring of the effectiveness of measures to address work related stress by collating sickness absence statistics;
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements; and
- Provide support on the management of change to managers and individuals Staff

All staff

All employees of the University are encouraged to:

- Follow the guidance in relation to work related stress and use the support systems in place;
- Cooperate with the University in the implementation of this Policy and raise issues of concern with their line manager, Safety Representative, or Occupational Health;
- Feel able and encouraged to seek support if required for their own health, safety and wellbeing ;
- Be supportive of work colleagues and maintain positive working relationships;
- Recognise that a colleague may demonstrate signs of stress but be unaware and/or unable to recognise those signs in themselves;
- Take action e.g. by discussing with a senior manager, if they have concerns about stress in the workplace; and
- Accept opportunities for training when recommended and consider support and counselling services available.

Safety Representatives

All Trade Union or Worker Appointed safety representatives have a right to be consulted on matters related to health and safety at work including work related stress and have a responsibility to:

- Assist and cooperate with the University in addressing work related stress issues and implementation of this Policy;
- Provide responses when consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress;
- Consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys;
- Be involved in the risk assessment process where required;

Further information on the statutory rights of Safety reps is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/hsrepresentatives.htm>

Health and Safety Committees

- The University Health and Safety Committee consisting of management and TU representatives will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented; and
- The Committees will oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

Related Policies

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement
- Staffing Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace
- Health, Wellbeing and Safety Policy

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Equality Impact Assessment	
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