

Notes :

PREVENTING AND TACKLING STRESS AT WORK An Approach for Higher Education



“Its only by creating a positive work environment that we can hold true to our belief that people are our most important asset.”

Jim Foulds

Chair, the tripartite

Higher Education Sector Forum on Health and Safety

Notes :

Notes :

PREVENTING AND TACKLING STRESS AT WORK
An Approach for Higher Education

© The Universities and Colleges Employers Association.

Further copies available from:

Universities and Colleges Employers Association
Woburn House
20 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HU

Tel: 020 7383 2444
Fax: 020 7383 2666
Web: www.ucea.ac.uk

See inside back cover for CD-ROM

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher. Enquires should be directed to UCEA at the above address.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Foreword	7
Sec. 1 - Why Avoid Stress?	8
Sec. 2 - Prevention and Assessment	11
Sec. 3 - Strategies for Dealing with Stress	14
Sec. 4 - Management Standards	16
Sec. 5 - Legal Responsibilities	20
Sec. 6 - Trade Unions and other Professional Associations	22
Sec. 7 - Practical Interventions	23
(i) Case Study at The University of Birmingham	23
(ii) Well-Being/Stress Checklist	26
(iii) Five Steps to Risk Assessment	28
(iv) HSE Indicator Tool	30
(v) Guidelines on Good Practice	32
(vi) Risk Assessment at Nottingham Trent University	37
(vii) Stress Risk Management Strategy at the University of Huddersfield	41
(viii) Staff Development Provision at City University	45
(ix) Powerpoint Presentations on Stress	49
Useful References	49

**(ix) PowerPoint Presentation on Stress Awareness
Included on the accompanying CD-ROM
(Developed by Dr. Mike Boryslawskyj) - see inside back cover**

**PowerPoint presentation given to UPA on stress guidance
(developed by Clive Parkinson and HSE)**

Useful References

- HSE home webpage for tackling stress
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>
 - ACAS Advisory Booklet – Stress at Work
<http://www.acas.org.uk/>
 - Association of Colleges – Work Related Stress Joint Guidance
<http://www.aoc.co.uk/>
 - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development - Recovery, rehabilitation and retention– A CIPD Guide for personnel professionals to help them support employees suffering from stress and other mental health problems.
<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/mentalhlthrehabretent.htm?IsSrchRes=1>
 - HSE Research Report 133 – Beacons of Excellence in Stress Prevention
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr133.htm>
 - HSE Research Report 138 – Best Practice in Rehabilitating Employees following Absence Due to Work Related Stress
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr138.htm>
 - HSE Research Report 168 – Occupation and Mental Health
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr168.pdf>
- HSE Statistics on Stress
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/sources.htm#lfsswi>

Assertiveness

Facilitator:
Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 4.30pm

Assertive behaviour is a beneficial skill that everyone can use, regardless of their personality. This session examines why it is sometimes hard to refuse demands and aims to build the skills necessary for behaving assertively in a practical manner. Participants will learn how to say 'no' to unreasonable demands, ask for feedback and make requests.

Who should attend?

Staff who would like to focus on becoming assertive.

Conflict Management

Facilitator:
Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 5.00pm

Managing conflicts can be a challenging task for anyone. This course will provide practical skills to effectively diffuse a situation or deal with behaviour which has the potential to escalate into conflict or confrontation.

Who should attend?

Any staff member who feels they could benefit from developing conflict management skills; in particular individuals in front-line positions or roles where dealing with students is a major aspect of their work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This material has been produced by the combined efforts of a group of higher education (HE) professionals from the following bodies:

SCOP – The Standing Conference of Principals

The Standing Conference of Principals is the representative body for higher education colleges in England and Northern Ireland.

UCEA – The Universities and Colleges Employers Association

The Universities and Colleges Employers' Association is the employers' association for universities and colleges of higher education in the United Kingdom. UCEA provides a framework within which institutions can discuss, and seek advice and guidance on salaries, conditions of service, employee relations and all matters connected with employment within the higher education sector. UCEA services include provision of a national focus for health and safety matters with human resource implications.

UPA – The Universities Personnel Association

The Universities Personnel Association is the key organisation for human resources professionals in higher education in the UK.

USHA – The Universities Safety and Health Association

The Universities Safety and Health Association is an association of universities with the aim of promoting best practice in health and safety management in member institutions by providing a strategic approach to the exchange of information and a forum for debate of developments in health and safety management. USHA is committed to developing relationships with other professional bodies having an interest or influence on health and safety management in HE.

Grateful thanks are extended to the members of the UCEA working group who drafted the material. The members were:

Jim Foulds (Chair)	Pro Chancellor at the University of Bristol and a CUC nominated UCEA board member.
Dr. Mike Boryslawskyj	Formerly Head of Health and Safety and Occupational Health at The University of Huddersfield and now an independent consultant.
Tina Buckle	Director of The Organisational and Staff Development Unit at City University. UPA Representative
John Mellor	Executive Member of USHA and Health and Safety Manager at Nottingham Trent University.
Clive Parkinson (Project Director)	Executive member of USHA, Director of Health, Safety and Environment at The University of Sussex and Health and Safety Adviser to UCEA.

Hazel Ponsford Chair of SCOP Personnel Network and Head of Human Resources at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

Thanks to individuals who contributed additional case studies:

David Harrison Director of Health and Safety at the University of Birmingham

Thanks also to all those professionals in the sector, the Health and safety Executive (HSE) and the Trade Unions who responded to our first consultative draft in such a positive way and whose comments we have tried hard to reflect in this final version.

Managing Yourself

Facilitator:
Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 4.30pm (both days)

A two-day course which identifies delegates' own personal barriers to progression and will explore ways of changing this behaviour to overcome these obstacles. The key elements of self-management will be explored and particular emphasis will be placed on learning assertive behaviour and stress management techniques to assist participants in achieving their goals and gain a sense of control.

Who should attend?

All staff who wish to communicate more effectively, achieve their personal and professional objectives and control their stress levels.

Time Management

Facilitator:
Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 4.30pm

Today's society is increasingly hectic and with pressing deadlines to meet, goals to achieve and a work life balance to attain, it can often be a challenge to fulfil all our responsibilities. The session aims to assist in the development of an individual strategy so that the daily challenge of managing individual and organisational performance can be achieved. Delegates will explore innovative ways to manage their time and prioritise tasks while maintaining attention to detail.

Who should attend?

Any staff member who would like to develop their time management skills.

Understanding and Managing Stress – for Managers

Facilitator:
Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 4.30pm

This workshop is designed to raise managers' awareness of how stress affects the well-being and performance of both managers and staff at work. It will look at the nature and causes of stress, provide strategies for identifying, controlling and minimising stress and offer tools to support staff experiencing stress. Information about the university's policy on mental health and stress in the workplace as well as sources of help and information will also be provided.

Who should attend?

This session is highly recommended for any manager responsible for staff. Managers interested in attending the 'Understanding and Managing Stress for Managers' workshop may find it helpful to have attended a policy briefing first (see above). Please note these briefings are not a substitute for training in stress risk assessment. Details of sessions on stress risk assessment can be found above.

Understanding and Managing Stress – for Non-Managerial Staff

Facilitator:
Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 4.30pm

This workshop is designed specifically for staff in non-managerial positions within the university. Its aim is to raise awareness of how stress affects people's well-being and performance at work and what can be done to help individuals reduce their personal stress. The session will help staff recognise and identify how stress affects them individually and will offer practical strategies for controlling and minimising stress. Colleagues will also be provided with tools to help identify what causes stress in those around them and how to control and minimise the impact of stress in themselves and others. Further sources of help and information will also be provided.

Who should attend?

This session is likely to be of interest to any member of staff who wants to understand more about stress with a view to taking control of it.

Foreword

The management of stress in the workplace is now recognised as an issue that has grown in prominence over recent years and one that Higher Education must tackle in an appropriately serious manner.

Avoiding harmful stress at work is part of good management which can pay great dividends. Getting it wrong can have serious effects on personal performance as well as the potential for financial and reputational damage to institutions. It is for this reason that the HSE have made stress one of their priority areas. That is why we are encouraging HEIs to adopt the HSE Management Standards.

Both the document and its related guidance have been produced to support the HE sector in handling this issue. It is targeted at helping institutions arrive at their own individual solutions, geared to local needs. Whilst part of our aim is to respond, in a cost effective way to legislation and strong guidance in this area, our main desire is to point out the real benefits of dealing with harmful stress in a structured and caring manner. A proactive, rather than reactive, approach is being increasingly recognised by both managers and staff as bringing demonstrable benefits to institutions.

We hope you find the booklet and the CD-Rom to be valuable tools in the management of stress in the workplace.

David Melville

Vice-Chancellor University of Kent
Chair, UCEA Health and Safety committee



1. Why Avoid Stress ?

It is now generally accepted by all who work in the people-related professions, human resources, health & safety, occupational health and trade unions, that stress, as distinct from reasonable pressures and challenges, is harmful to both the individual and the organisation.

Whilst in many respects, higher education is no different from other large organisations, it would be true to say that there are differences when compared to other places of work. There is also no doubt that the sector has undergone massive change in recent years, raising the potential for increased stress.

In most institutions, organisational and personal responsibilities are not set in stone and may be constantly changing. It is therefore considered to be good practice to review organisational issues on a regular basis. This helps to ensure that reporting lines are clear, work loads reasonable and that tasks are allocated in accordance with personal skills, experience and ability.

The effects of work-related stress both to individuals and organisations are extensive. Work-related stress may affect individuals physiologically, psychologically and behaviourally. Outcomes include lower levels of self-esteem, job satisfaction and motivation as well as higher blood and cholesterol levels, depression, ulcers and heart disease. Furthermore, depression and anxiety are the most common stress-related complaints presented to general practitioners.

Stress is often a symptom of poor employment relations and can seriously affect productivity. Organisations which talk regularly with their employees and have effective systems and procedures in place for dealing with issues like absence and discipline, are much more likely to avoid work-related stress, and able to deal with potentially stressful situations, when they arise.

The primary task of every employer should be to try to eliminate or control stressors, ie the root causes of work-related stress.

As long as work is managed safely and effectively, it is good for our health and well-being. People in work have been found to be physically, psychologically and socially healthier than people who are unemployed. The inactivity and isolation that normally accompany long-term absences from work have a negative impact on our physical, psychological and social health and well-being and a well-managed return to work helps employees to manage their symptoms or reduce their impact. For most employees, work is more than a way to earn money. It also provides them with a sense of belonging, social contact, a purpose and self-esteem.

Therefore, the best approach to helping employees is to enable them to remain in the workplace. This may require adjustments to their working hours or conditions but the benefits to the employee and the organisation can be immense.

(viii) Example of Staff Development Provision for Tackling Stress in the Workplace

Developed by City University

Preventing Stress – Risk Assessment

Facilitator:

Three repetitions per year
10.00am – 1.00pm or 2.00pm – 5.00pm

This course aims to provide all managers with the skills to assess the risks of stress in their workplace. Delegates will learn how to undertake a stress risk assessment following the procedures and tools contained in City's stress policy. The results of the stress risk assessments may lead to recommendations for colleagues to attend other stress interventions outlined below.

Who should attend?

This course is mandatory for line managers and project leaders. It is also highly recommended for deans, directors and senior heads of departments.

Managers Briefings on the Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace Policy

Facilitator:

Three repetitions per year
9.30am – 11.30am, 12.00pm – 2.00pm, or 2.45pm – 4.45pm

The intention of this two-hour briefing is to inform all managers about the policy on mental health and stress in the workplace, to offer practical tips on how to help prevent stress occurring in their areas and to advise what action to take where it does occur.

Who should attend?

This session is highly recommended for any manager responsible for staff. Managers interested in attending the 'Understanding and Managing Stress for Managers' workshop (see below) may find it helpful to have attended the above briefing first. Please note these briefings are not a substitute for training in risk assessment. Details of sessions on stress risk assessment can be found above.

Source of stress	Risk identified	Strategies for managing risk
WORK CONTENT CONT.		
Flexible working.	Allowing one person greater flexibility may put undue pressure on other staff.	Manage expectations by ensuring staff realise that flexibility must fit with the requirements of the service. Implement the flexible working policy uniformly across the service. Discourage long hours over anything other than a short period. Encourage proper balance between work and home life.
Temporary staff shortages.	Staff expected to cover may be unclear what is expected of them.	Ensure staff are aware of areas of work they are expected to cover.
Harrowing situations.	Staff may have to deal with distressed students.	Staff should try to disengage personal feelings when dealing with staff and students. Staff should take advantage of the supervision arrangements in place for welfare/counselling staff.

Why Guidance?

This document is intended to help you to put in place an effective approach for the management of stress in your institution which, in turn, will bring benefits to all staff by improving their contribution to the organisation and to their own well-being.

The working group considered many alternative definitions of stress and decided to adopt that proposed by 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**”. Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep us motivated. But excessive pressure can lead to stress which undermines performance, is costly to employers and can have the potential to affect the health and well-being of individuals.

The document has three main themes:

- Suggesting some strategies for preventing, identifying and dealing with stress in the workplace.
- Bringing together the key pieces of guidance, such as that from the HSE, to which institutions will probably choose to conform.
- Providing information and links to other bodies.

Why Now?

- Stress has risen in the political agenda.
- Increasing awareness in the public perception of stress.
- Growing recognition in institutions themselves that it is an issue to be addressed and a willingness within the HE sector to deal with it.
- Increased litigation in this area.
- HSE has produced management standards.
- Commitment to further develop previous guidance.

The previous guidance for the higher education sector, published jointly by the former Universities Safety Association, now the Universities Safety and Health Association, together with the Universities and Colleges Employers Association, “Dealing with Stress in Higher Education – How to get Started”, suggested that there would be further development of the guidance.

The latest figures published by the HSE on the incidence of stress show that the education sector performs poorly when compared to the all industry average. The HSE SWI (self-reported work-related illness) survey 2003/04, which gives the following:

Estimated incidence/incidence rate of self-reported stress, depression or anxiety caused or made worse by current or most recent job:

EDUCATION: Incidence of 24,000 workers, or incidence rate of 930 per 100,000 employed in the last 12 months.

ALL INDUSTRIES: Incidence of 212,000 workers, or incidence rate of 730 per 100,000 employed in the last 12 months.

This document addresses key areas that are likely to be effective in the prevention of stress and help reduce the incidence of stress in the HE sector. The HSE has recently published its management standards for tackling stress at work and this provides us with a timely opportunity to revise and further develop the previous guidance in the light of recent advances and experiences gained in the sector.

Key Considerations

- Recognising the symptoms of stress in staff, yourself and others.
- Adopting a risk assessment approach for identifying potential sources of stress and their impact on health and well-being.
- Putting effective control measures in place to eliminate or minimise the effects of stress.
- Identifying the options and strategies available to managers for effective stress prevention and management.
- Reviewing, amending and implementing the policies and practices presently in place.
- Awareness of the legal framework pertaining to stress in the workplace.
- Developing suitable training for managers and staff so that they are better equipped to recognise and tackle stress (see Practical Interventions vi).

Stress is a wide and complex subject and management have to deal with its effects irrespective of its source. Therefore, whilst **it is specifically work related stress that we are addressing**, other aspects remain of some interest and must be considered if we are to be truly sympathetic to the problems faced by some of our employees.

Institutional Costs

- Financial costs due to lost time, lower productivity and replacement staff.
- Discontinuity and the effect on teaching and research programmes and services delivery.

Personal Costs

- Health and well-being.
- Effect on career development.
- Loss of talent.

Source of stress	Risk identified	Strategies for managing risk
PERSONAL CONT.		
Quality of interpersonal relationships at work.	Personal relations can become strained due to perceived inequality in workloads. Personality clashes exist to varying degrees (potentially stressful for third parties too).	Review job content and work load patterns, involving staff in redefining job content. Ensure all staff are aware that counselling is available for staff. Ensure all staff are aware of named person procedure for harassment and bullying. Personality clashes should not be allowed to interfere with work. Anyone suffering from stress as a result of a personality clash should report it to their line manager.
Unreasonable conflict.	Conflict may occur.	Deal with conflicts openly rather than ignore them. Recognise that differences of opinion, honestly held are not necessarily 'a bad thing'.
WORK CONTENT		
Adequate control.	Staff may feel that changes are outside their control.	Ensure that changes are explained satisfactorily and involve staff as much as possible in the process. Staff need to be aware that some changes are also outside the university's control.
Workload.	Fears about reducing or increasing workloads can both be causes of stress.	As above.
Pace of work.	Internal and external pressures may make unreasonable demands on time, leading staff to feel they have no control over the pace of work.	Manage expectations. The nature of the work entails meeting internally- and externally-imposed deadlines. Identify deadlines up front wherever possible so staff can plan around them.

Source of stress	Risk identified	Strategies for managing risk
PHYSICAL		
Work environment (heat/light/space/noise).	Staff may not be in control of their environment. There may be problems associated with open-plan offices.	Monitor environment as necessary. Provide what aids are feasible e.g. blinds, fans, heaters, shade etc. Manage expectations. Report faults to estates services.
Intrusive behaviour.	Other staff's work patterns and/or conversation may be intrusive.	Everyone must be considerate towards and tolerant of everyone else.
Abuse of shared spaces.	The areas around shared equipment may become cluttered. The kitchen may be uninviting due to other people's clutter.	Everyone should take personal responsibility for their use of such shared spaces.
PERSONAL		
Job insecurity.	Staff are aware of the need to reduce staffing levels and fear for their jobs.	Remind staff that the university's stated policy is to treat redundancy as a last resort. Use personal development reviews to help staff identify new opportunities and new directions and support development for progression. Foster attitude that to reach out for new opportunities secures the future.



2. Prevention and Assessment

There are key issues when dealing with stress at work and these are:

Prevention

Policies for

- Stress management.
- Harassment & bullying.
- Flexible working etc.

Assessment

- Adoption of the HSE Standards.
- The HSE Indicator Tool for Work-related Stress.
- The HSE "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" approach.

Support

- For both management and individuals.
- Training in recognition of stress.
- Counselling availability.
- Employee assistance programmes.
- Occupational health and rehabilitation back into work.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require a suitable and adequate assessment of risks to health & safety to be carried out. Everyone, at all levels in an institution, has responsibilities to help ensure that stress is minimised in the workplace. In many institutions the responsibilities are:

Senior Management Responsibilities

- Recognise stress as a health issue requiring proper management.
- Give their employees comprehensive and relevant information about work-related stress.
- Develop, implement and maintain a stress management policy to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, work-related stress.
- Ensure that adequate resources are in place to support the policy.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy.
- Create an atmosphere to promote professionalism, inclusiveness and trust.

Managers' Responsibilities

- Ensure that adequate risk assessments are carried out to evaluate stress.
- Keep under review sickness absence and staff turnover to identify any problem areas.
- Be able to identify and respond to stress issues.
- Be aware that stress is minimised in an organisation where there exists mutual trust, promotion of self-esteem, shared objectives and common goals.
- Act on information/reports received from competent professionals including occupational health and human resources.

Employees' Responsibilities

- Individuals have a part to play in making reasonable adjustments where working practices have to change, sometimes due to circumstances beyond the university's control.
- Anyone who feels they are suffering from stress should, wherever possible, inform their line manager so that he/she will have an opportunity to resolve the problem.
- If anyone feels that they are unable to raise the matter with their line manager they could follow the local procedure which may include referral to the university occupational health service, the university counselling service, their trade union representative, or share their concern with a trusted colleague.

If an individual believes there is a factor in the workplace causing work-related stress, then this should be brought to the attention of the line manager. It is the responsibility of management to satisfy themselves that risk assessments:

- Take account of all foreseeable hazards.
- Are completed to a consistent and reasonable standard.
- Relate to the actual work undertaken.
- Are regularly reviewed.
- Are adequately recorded.

Clearly a risk assessment which identifies all hazards which may impact on health and safety must consider those factors which may cause stress.

An assessment should be made of the institution's position with respect to the management standards. The assessment process should be developed following full consultation with staff, including employee representatives and trade union representatives. Any recommended solutions should also be subject to the consultation arrangements.

(vii) Stress Risk Management Strategy

Developed in conjunction with Student Services at the University of Huddersfield

Introduction

The service encourages its staff to follow good practices in order to minimise the risk of unacceptable levels of stress. The service would hope to foster a culture where good communication, clear leadership, certainty, flexibility, a healthy environment, empathy for colleagues, mutual trust, the fostering of self-esteem, shared goals and objectives are accepted norms. We encourage a culture that does not see the symptoms of stress as a sign of weakness, where people are able to raise concerns in an assertive but non-aggressive manner. However, it is recognised that stressful situations still arise. Some potential sources of stress, the risks they entail and some strategies for dealing with them have been identified and are listed below.

Source of stress	Risk identified	Strategies for managing risk
PLANNING		
Inadequate communication.	Staff may learn about events from external sources.	Staff need to be pro-active in asking for information. Managers must explain the situation and keep staff informed as soon as possible.
ORGANISATION		
Lack of consultation in decisions on change.	Staff may feel that consultation is tokenism.	Recognise that consultation does not necessarily mean that everyone will get exactly what they want. Explain criteria on which decisions have been made. Encourage staff to take responsibility for their own well-being.
Inadequately defined objectives – conflicting demands.	Staff may feel unclear of what is expected of them, especially in times of uncertainty.	Set clear objectives during personal development reviews and ensure progress is measured. Involve staff as much as possible in decision making process. Encourage staff to take responsibility for their own well-being.

CHANGE

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

RISK IDENTIFICATION	YES/NO	Recommended action
Do you ensure that staff understand the reasons for change?		
Is staff consultation part of the change programme?		
Do you ensure that staff understand the likely impact of change on their job?		
Are special arrangements made to support staff through the change process?		
Is the change process communicated to staff?		

Risk assessment must be a planned activity, and may be required at two levels:

- Generic – responsible managers should carry out an overall review of the factors liable to lead to stress problems. This document gives guidance on how to do this (see Practical Interventions vi).
- Specific risk assessments – if this overall review identifies individual tasks and workloads liable to result in particularly high levels of stress these should be assessed further, and where necessary a consultation with the specialist support services initiated.

The assessments should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Review of assessments and intervention may be necessary where an individual suffers stress.



3. Strategies for Dealing with Stress

Stress/Well-being and Mental Health Policies

Whilst many organisations have developed strategies for preventing and dealing with stress (see CD-ROM), others have found that a well-being policy is much more effective in recognising the need to maximise the well-being of their employees rather than merely reducing their level of stress. This approach is in line with that taken by the World Health Organisation (1990). Whether organisations choose a ‘well-being’ or ‘stress’ policy the elements that should be contained in the policy are very similar. **There is a need for a clear statement, supported by senior management, which shows that the organisation is committed to developing a working environment that promotes the health and well-being of the organisation and its employees.** The statement should be supported by a number of principles including:

- A constant review of company policies, procedures and initiatives to ensure that they maximise employee well-being.
- The identification and regular review of the key well-being indicators.
- The provision of effective advice, support, counselling and training to enhance employee well-being.
- The process for evaluating the effectiveness of all well-being initiatives.

There are four main strategies that institutions can adopt. Research has shown that **a combination of strategies, under the umbrella of a preventative organisational approach to stress, is the most effective way of tackling work-related stress.**

- **Policy, procedures and systems audit**
This approach requires the institution to undertake an audit of its policies, procedures and systems to ensure that it provides a working environment that protects the well-being of the workforce and is able to identify troubled employees and provide them with an appropriate level of support.
- **Problem-centred approach**
This approach provides a problem-solving model for dealing with stress and other psycho-social issues. It takes issues and problems that arise within the workplace and identifies why they have occurred and then finds ways to solve them. The identification process may involve undertaking a risk assessment, examining sickness absence levels, employee feedback, claims for compensation and performance deficits.

RELATIONSHIPS

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

RISK IDENTIFICATION	YES/NO	Recommended action
Are procedures in place to resolve workplace conflict?		
Do staff feel able to report their concerns?		
Is there a policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour at work?		
Are teams organised and selected with working relationships in mind?		
Are openness, honesty and respect encouraged within teams?		
Are people aware of the penalties associated with unacceptable behaviour?		

ROLE

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

Are conflicting demands placed on staff?		
Is the induction procedure comprehensive?		
Are job descriptions clear and accurate?		
Do staff have a clear plan of work?		
How well do people understand how their job fits into wider organisational aims?		

CONTROL

How much say the person has in the way they do their work.

RISK IDENTIFICATION	YES/NO	Recommended action
Do staff have a say about the way their work is undertaken?		
Is the pace of work driven by a source beyond their control (e.g. a machine)?		
Are staff encouraged to show initiative and use their full range of skills?		
Do staff feel they are able to air concerns about their work environment?		
Do staff have the right to refuse e.g. to deal with a difficult member of the public?		

SUPPORT

The level of support provided by line management and peers

Are staff able to provide support to their colleagues?		
Do staff know how to access managerial support?		
Are staff encouraged to seek support at an early stage?		
Are staff supported when undertaking new tasks?		
Are systems in place to help staff cope with work- or home-related issues?		

- **Well-being approach**

This approach takes the view that the aim is to maximise individual employee well-being and quality of life. An essential element in achieving this is for managers and supervisors to be trained in stress management as an integral element in a management training programme. Although it uses similar tools to those used by the problem-centred approach it is much more proactive in identifying ways to create a healthy workforce.

- **Employee-centred approach**

This approach works at the individual level of the employee. Individuals are provided with education and support in order to help them deal with the problems they face in the workplace. The employee centred-approach focuses on employee counselling and stress management training.

Measures to reduce workplace stress

- Undertaking a stress audit using indicators such as the Occupational Stress Indicator and subsequently directing resources to reduce or eliminate the sources of stress.
- Agenda items should include terms and conditions of employment, physical and psychological working conditions, work content, communication systems and working relationships.
- The development of a supportive work ethos to encourage staff to discuss and seek support when experiencing stress.

The following interventions for individuals may be considered when sources of stress cannot be eliminated:

- Stress management and relaxation techniques training.
- Promoting healthy behaviour and exercise.
- Personal counselling schemes.
- Other personal skills training.
- EAPs – employee assistance programmes

Stress and the employee

Excessive pressure and problems can occur in an employee's personal life as well as at work. If an employee is facing a relationship breakdown, financial problems, or bereavement, it is possible that these problems may affect the employee's ability to work effectively. However, if personal problems begin to affect performance at work then this will need to be raised and discussed with the employee. The objective of the meeting would be to identify the help that the institution can give to the employee to return to effective working.



4. Management Standards

Definitions

It is readily accepted that stress is a very complex issue and that there will be more than one definition that will be acceptable and applicable to the sector.

There are common areas running through the different definitions in so far as there seems to be a consensus that there is an imbalance between resources and capabilities on one hand, and the pressure of the work to be done on the other. This provides us with an opportunity to identify those factors at work that can lead to excessive pressure for individuals, assess them and implement measures to reduce the impact of those factors in the workplace.

As part of their overall strategy to reduce work-related ill-health, the Health and Safety Executive has developed some clear guidance on stress management standards. All institutions must reach these standards or their equivalents. Having looked at the matter in some depth, the working group is encouraging the sector to adopt the standards as the safest and simplest way of achieving compliance. The *Management Standards for Work-related Stress* launched in November 2004, (see Practical Interventions iv) encourages organisations to take preventative measures through a risk assessment.

The assessment consists of organisations comparing themselves against:

- Demand – being able to cope with the demands of the job.
- Control – having an adequate say over how work is done.
- Support – having adequate support from colleagues and superiors.
- Roles – understanding roles and responsibilities.
- Relationships – not being subjected to unacceptable behaviours.
- Change – being involved in any organisational changes.

Whilst on the face of it such standards may seem to be another administrative burden on the institution, the working group wants to emphasise that for the most part, it should be a matter of adjusting existing systems and practices to take the issue of work-related stress into consideration. In other words, using existing tools and procedures. Nevertheless, the adaptation of existing procedures may require a change of culture and approach within the institution and therefore, should be incorporated into any total review of the institution that may take place.

3.2 Subjective assessment (active measures)

- (i) Stress audit.
- (ii) Staff survey.
- (iii) Focus groups.
- (iv) Performance appraisal.
- (v) Return to work interviews.
- (vi) Exit interviews.

(vi) Risk Assessment Programme/Review of Management Arrangements

Developed by Nottingham Trent University

School/Department

Date Review date

DEMANDS

Includes issues like workload, working patterns, competency and physical environment.

RISK IDENTIFICATION	YES/NO	Recommended action
Do you organise jobs with realistic demands in mind?		
Are demands matched to staff skills and abilities?		
Is the physical work environment comfortable?		
Is repetitive and monotonous work kept to a minimum?		
Do staff have sufficient resources – time, equipment, expertise?		
Are staff exposed to the threat of physical violence or verbal abuse from the public?		

- (iii) If a staff member continues to find difficulty in coping, the manager will consider redesigning the job or re-deploying the staff member to a less stressful post. In this event, liaison with human resources and the occupational health service is required. The staff member will be fully involved in this process. This may require the individual to consider changing from full-time to part-time duties if this is possible, or to changing job or career with the university.

2.7 Traumatic or violent incidents

There may be occasions when staff experience traumatic, violent or distressing incidents. In these situations, managers or supervisors will offer the staff member the support of the staff counsellor or the occupational health service at an early stage following an incident for appropriate support and action.

2.8 Change management

Theoretically, in order to be effective, change should be preceded and followed by a period of stability. This is not always possible in a rapidly changing organisation. Under these circumstances it is crucial to recognise the effects of change. Managers will consider the following interventions in order to help minimise the effects of change:

- Regular consultation with all staff throughout the process.
- Ensure effective two way communication with all staff.
- Allow adequate resources including time, space, infrastructure, emotional energy and finances.
- Ensure staff development needs are identified and implemented.
- Provide effective support throughout the process.

3. Measuring Performance

In order to assess the nature and extent of mental health problems in the workplace, data in the following areas can be helpful. This can apply to the university as a whole or be used by individual institutes, schools and central portfolios to monitor the performance.

3.1 Health and performance indicators (reactive measures)

- (i) Sickness absence data – clusters, trends, irregular attendance, diagnosis of stress.
- (ii) Ill health retirements – reasons, clusters.
- (iii) Staff turnover.
- (iv) Grievance and harassment cases.
- (v) Occupational health referrals including a percentage of work-related referrals.
- (vi) Poor work performance/productivity.
- (vii) Accidents at work.
- (viii) Poor employee relations – industrial action, litigation.

In order to meet the standards, an institution must achieve the following:

HSE Management Standards

DEMANDS

Includes issues like workload work patterns, and the work environment.

The standard is that:

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

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work.
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands.
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees.
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Working group comment: To achieve this standard is more a matter of developing a style of management and communication, which takes individuals and their needs into consideration, rather than creating new systems and structures. Nevertheless, there may need to be some revision of what is already in place and some degree of upgrading existing systems.

CONTROL

How much say the person has in the way they do their work.

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work.
- 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 organisation encourages employees to develop their skills.
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken.
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

Working group comment: To achieve this standard requires effective two-way communication and consultation with all staff. This should be readily achievable through existing channels such as informed discussions with supervisors/line managers, individual performance development reviews, open-door policies, team meetings and participation in drawing up job descriptions.

SUPPORT

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

The standard is that:

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

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation 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.
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Working group comment: *To achieve this standard requires supervisors, team leaders and managers to ensure that members of staff are equipped with the necessary skills and information to carry out their jobs effectively. Personal development plans could be one method of approach.*

RELATIONSHIPS

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

The standard is that:

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

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness.
- Employees share information relevant to their work.
- The organisation 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.
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

Working group comment: *To achieve this standard, institutions should review their current policies and procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour at work and bring these to the attention of all staff as part of raising awareness.*

2.4 Staff development

- (i) Staff may experience stress through feeling that they are not adequately trained for their current post and may be especially at risk if they move to a new or changed role. The identification of training needs will have a high priority, especially so in cases where restructuring of individual posts, sections or larger units is taking place. The identification and meeting of training needs will not be seen merely as a token annual exercise, but as a continuing and vital process.
- (ii) Managers and supervisors use performance management meetings to raise staff awareness of the risks of stress and of the measures they will take to identify and reduce it.
- (iii) In all management and supervisory training (as well as in other relevant skills courses), The policy on mental health and stress in the workplace will be discussed as part of a manager's responsibilities. In these contexts, managers and supervisors will also examine how they are able to manage their own levels of stress.
- (iv) The Staff Development Unit will provide general stress management and other related courses for staff at regular intervals. Managers and supervisors will encourage and enable staff to attend these courses. Appropriate training for those managers and supervisors responsible for implementing all or some aspects of the university's policy on mental health and stress in the workplace will also be provided.

2.5 Absence management

- (i) Managers and supervisors will ensure that all absences are properly recorded.
- (ii) All absences will be discussed with staff and any underlying reasons identified.
- (iii) Managers will maintain regular contact with absent staff. This contact will be undertaken sensitively and appropriately. The manager will discuss any underlying causes and arrange support and assistance if the absence appears likely to continue. HR advice will be sought at an early stage.
- (iv) Managers will consider referral to the occupational health service or the staff counselling service if appropriate.

2.6 Return to work after absence

- (i) Managers will plan an individual's return to work after any illness with a formal return to work interview. This planning will include consultation with the staff member and advice from human resources and the occupational health service where appropriate.
- (ii) After a staff member returns to work, managers will continue to monitor and discuss their recovery and the factors which may have contributed to or caused the stress. The frequency of these meetings may be higher than in a normal line management situation.

2.2 Pre-employment health screening

- (i) All permanent staff at the university will be required to complete a health questionnaire.
- (ii) No person shall take up employment with the university until the occupational health service has assessed the pre-employment health questionnaire. The questionnaire will be structured to ensure that the questions about mental health bring out full and appropriate information.
- (iii) The assessment process will be used in a positive way, identifying what support, if any, an applicant might need to carry out a job effectively. Discussions will take place with the applicant during this process.
- (iv) If a potential stress problem has been identified in the initial screening process but the decision is taken to appoint the person nevertheless the manager will monitor the well-being and progress of the staff member at regular intervals. This requires the full co-operation of the employee, who will also be required to raise any subsequent work-related health concerns with the manager as soon as possible.

2.3 Induction, promotion, transfer/redeployment

- (i) All new staff must receive local induction into their posts. Starting a new job is demanding and a planned programme of activity will help to eliminate many concerns.
- (ii) As part of both local and general induction programmes, the university's policy on mental health and stress in the workplace will be discussed with new staff. Staff will be advised from the outset on sources of help and support.
- (iii) Some factors which may contribute to work-related stress include promotion, taking on a new role, transfer to another area or re-deployment. A local induction programme similar to that for newly appointed staff will be arranged. The staff member's manager or supervisor will monitor progress and well-being at regular intervals and staff who have been subject to change will notify their manager early on of any problems, such as stress.

ROLE

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The standard is that:

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

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

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

Working group comment: *To achieve this standard, institutions may need to review their present procedures for personal development reviews and encourage staff to make their line managers aware of any issues in this area.*

CHANGE

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The standard is that:

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

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- The organisation 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.

Working group comment: *To achieve this standard, institutions may need to review their methodologies and procedures for consulting with staff prior to implementing any significant changes that impact upon individuals*

The HSE undertook a consultation exercise in June 2004, with the standards piloted in 24 organisations, including some universities. The standards are for guidance and not in themselves legally binding, but the HSE has indicated that they may be used as evidence against employers that continue to ignore their responsibilities in managing stress under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.



5. Legal Responsibilities

The HSE takes the issue of stress seriously and in 2003 issued its first ever improvement notice under the Health and Safety at Work Act against an employer (West Dorset Hospitals NHS Trust) for failing to take steps to identify and manage stress, following a complaint by an employee.

It is against this background of proactive stress management that all institutions will be assessed. This guidance gives detailed practical approaches and examples of best practice, both from within and without the HE sector, to equip those persons having responsibilities for the management of stress with the tools to effectively discharge those responsibilities. If stress is managed in a positive and enlightened way, most of the standards should be met.

Acts and Regulations

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act – Duty of Care.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations – Duty to assess risks to employees.
- Disability Discrimination Act – Duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- The Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations – Duty to consult with safety representatives of recognised trade unions.
- The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations – Duty to consult with employees not in groups covered by trade union safety representatives.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) is an umbrella piece of legislation under which a number of Acts and Regulations are brought into force. Section 2 of the Act covers the broad principle of the employer's "General Duty of Care". This general duty is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health (including mental health), safety and welfare of all employees whilst at work. It also requires that employers have systems in place so that employees are not exposed to unreasonable risks to their health and safety whilst at work. Where the work environment or procedures give rise to the risk of stress to employees, the employer has a legal duty to eliminate or control the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable. Reasonably practicable means that a balance has to be established between the costs, including time, of making the work procedure safe and the likelihood of that work practice causing injury or work-related ill-health. Employers must identify and control any foreseeable risk, unless the costs of doing so grossly outweigh that risk.

The emphasis in these guidance notes is to adopt a proactive approach by taking steps to prevent stress. Managers should not be concerned that this policy places significant additional burdens upon them. Most management responsibilities can be incorporated into general management practice, e.g. by raising the issue in line management meetings or, if appropriate, appraisal, probation, or absence management meetings.

1.2 Communication

The university will issue written and verbal guidance on preventing, recognising and managing stress at work. Senior managers will ensure visible support of the policy.

1.3 Co-operation

This policy will be implemented following full consultation with managers and all trade unions. Individual staff are reminded that they must alert their manager if they believe they are suffering from a work-related health problem, including stress.

1.4 Competence

Information and training on recognising and managing stress will continue to be given to managers, staff and support personnel and will be adapted to meet the changing needs of staff. Staff development will focus on stress awareness, stress management and conducting risk assessments. The purpose of the development opportunities offered will be to help identify stress and to provide guidance on how to deal with it thereafter.

2. Planning and Implementation

This section sets out the main situations in which stress-related issues may arise and provides information and guidance for managers.

2.1 Recruitment and selection

- (i) The full range of tasks and demands of a post will be set out clearly in the job description and details sent out to all candidates. These will also be fully discussed in the interview process. Areas of potential pressure and stress will be identified.
- (ii) All requests for references will request information about candidates' sickness and absence records using the human resources reference template.
- (iii) Where appropriate, referees will also be asked specific questions about candidates' abilities to deal with stressful situations.
- (iv) For posts where it is recognised that a higher than normal level of pressure and stress exists, candidates' tolerance to stress will become a more important factor in the selection process.
- (v) All jobs are, or have the potential to be, stressful at some time for some people. By accepting employment, the individual is deeming him or herself able to undertake all the tasks and requirements of the job competently and reliably.

(v) Guidelines on Good Practice

Developed by City University

1. Organisation for Effecting Policy

1.1 Control - roles and responsibilities for effecting policy

1.1.1 **Human Resources** will be responsible for providing staff development in the effective management of stress for individual staff and managers.

Human Resources will also monitor the effectiveness of this policy and will produce annual reports on the incidence of occupational stress.

1.1.2 The **Occupational Health Service**, including the Staff Counselling Service, will ensure adequate support for individuals experiencing stress and advise on training needs.

- (i) Under this policy, it is recommended that employees should be referred to occupational health for advice on those aspects of the role that the individual is fit to carry out and the areas where restrictions are advised.
- (ii) The staff counsellor is also available on a confidential basis for psychological support and employees may self-refer to the counsellor should they so wish.

1.1.3 **Individual staff** are responsible for:

- (i) Informing managers of any stress related problems.
- (ii) Adopting strategies to combat stress.
- (iii) Using counselling services to assist themselves.
- (iv) Attending staff development events on raising awareness and stress management.

1.1.4 **Managers** have responsibility for playing a key role in the implementation of this policy.

- (i) Managers are responsible for assessing the risks of stress and, working with relevant colleagues across the university, including the human resource department and the occupational health physician, for taking steps to control such risks as are identified.
- (ii) In the first instance managers may wish to discuss the matter with the employee in confidence and then, if necessary, consult with HR or OH for further advice.
- (iii) Managers will be offered staff development in order to enable them to recognise signs that an individual may be suffering from occupational stress and to be able to discuss the matter with the individual sensitively to see if any practical support can be provided. Managers will ensure good practice in all areas of staff management from recruitment to retirement and undertake regular formal risk assessments.

The HSE, in its guidance to help employers manage work-related stress, stated that, "Ill-health resulting from stress caused at work has to be treated the same as ill-health due to other physical causes present in the workplace. This means that employers do have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from the way that work is organised, the way people deal with each other at work or from the day-to-day demands placed on their employees. Employers should bear stress in mind when assessing possible health hazards in their workplaces, keeping an eye out for developing problems and being prepared to act if harm to health seems likely. In other words, stress should be treated like any other occupational health hazard.

In a judgement by the Court of Appeal in January 2005, six conjoined appeals – *Hartman v South Essex Mental Health & Community Care NHS Trust and others* (2005) (EWCA Civ 06), has put work-related stress in the spotlight once again. The court reconsidered the 16 general principles enunciated by Hale J in the seminal case of *Hatton v Sutherland* (2002) and the decision of the House of Lords in *Barber v Somerset County Council* (2004). The Court of Appeal held that the 16 prepositions in the latter case are useful signposts for judges faced with complex stress at work cases. Having established that the principles remained good law, the Court of Appeal considered each of the six appeals and some of the key principles that came out are most useful in interpreting the duty of care and foreseeability issues for employers.

- The court rejected that any one type of employment could be regarded as particularly high risk. It is not the job but the interactions between the individual and the job which can result in harm.
- The court found that an employer could not be expected to know confidential medical information disclosed by the claimant to occupational health(OH), although there may be circumstances where the duty of care owed to the employee requires that OH seeks his or her consent to disclose information that the employer needs to be aware of, if proper steps are to be taken to safeguard the welfare of the employee.
- The provision or availability of counselling is a relevant consideration for the court. The fact that a claimant did not avail themselves of a counselling service was relevant to foreseeability; if the claimant did not recognise that he/she needed counselling, how could the employer be held to be in a better position?
- In respect of part-time employees, the Court of Appeal held that it would only be in exceptional circumstances that someone working for two or three days a week with limited hours would make good a claim for injury caused by stress at work.

Other pieces of legislation also impact upon the way we tackle stress at work:

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) require employers to:

- Undertake assessments of the risks to the health and safety of employees and to introduce protective measures to control the risks.
- Review the assessment following changes (e.g. after a period of illness or injury that makes the employee more vulnerable).
- Undertake monitoring of the ongoing health and well-being of employees.

When an employee has suffered an injury or illness, it is necessary to revisit the risk assessments to check that the employee is adequately protected from being harmed. If the illness, injury or disability is work-related, there is a requirement to prevent or control the risks that could lead to more cases of injury, illness or disability or the worsening of existing ones.

The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) sets out the meaning of disability and makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against disabled people in terms of employment, opportunities and treatment.

Employers are also expected to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace or working arrangements so that the disabled person is not at any substantial disadvantage compared with a non-disabled person.

Examples of reasonable adjustments would include:

- Making adjustments to premises.
- Allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person.
- Arranging a transfer to a more suitable role.
- Altering their working hours.

Employers are not under a legal duty to prevent ill-health due to stress arising from circumstances outside work, such as personal or domestic problems. But it may be in their own, as well as their employees' interests to deal sympathetically with staff whose domestic circumstances or state of health make it difficult for them to cope for the time being with pressures of work.



6. Trade unions and other Professional Associations

Trade Unions and other professional associations make positive contributions to all areas of health and safety, and stress is no exception. Besides the legal requirements, it can be helpful to engage with and involve such bodies in the consultation on the development of policy, the monitoring of progress, the provision of training, the introduction of change and, in certain cases, the support of individuals.

HSE Indicator Tool - *continued*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
24. I get help and support I need from colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
25. I have some say over the way I work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
26. I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
27. I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
28. Staff are always consulted about change at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
29. I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
30. My working time can be flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
31. My colleagues are willing to listen to my work related problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
32. When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
33. I am supported through emotionally demanding work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
34. Relationships at work are strained	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
35. My line manager encourages me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

(iv) HSE Indicator Tool for Work Related Stress

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I am clear what is expected of me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2. I can decide when to take a break	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3. Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
4. I know how to go about getting my job done	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5. I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
6. I have unachievable deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
7. If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9. I have to work very intensively	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
10. I have a say in my own work speed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11. I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12. I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
13. I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14. There is friction or anger between colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
15. I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16. I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
17. I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
18. I am pressured to work long hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
19. I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20. I have to work very fast	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
21. I am subject to bullying at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
22. I have unrealistic time pressures	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
23. I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5



7. Practical Interventions

(i) Case Study
Stress Management at
The University of Birmingham

INTRODUCTION

In 1995 the university took a decision in response to the *Walker v Northumberland County Council* case to start looking at stress at work. This involved a survey of all staff using the standardised OSI instrument. The results were published and distributed to all staff and a programme of activities developed. This programme continues. Although in 1995 there was no comparator data for the sector, we established the need for attention to stress and established a policy and plans of action.

The work continues although evaluating its impact remains difficult. The emphasis in recent years has been on using a smarter survey tool designed to provide practical advice on action and developing a sophisticated network of support services for staff. We also took part in the HEFCE funded project on stress in HE run by the University of Plymouth (www.ihs.plymouth.ac.uk/~stresshe/index.htm).

APPROACH

We adopted the tertiary model of interventions. Prevention being the primary level, developing managers and awareness at the secondary level and support provision the third.

Our approach to proactive assessment has involved the use of a new generation survey, the Organisational Stress Measure (OSM), which is designed to identify issues affecting stress that are within the control of the organisation (i.e. that we can do something about) and providing practical recommendations for action. This is being rolled out across the university at budget centre level. Institution-wide surveys have some value in gauging the level of the problem but experience has shown that, whilst there are general concerns common to staff across the university, these tend to be non-specific in nature. Much can be done at school level. Surveys have shown clear differences between schools and departments and occupational groups within them.

The most important prevention measure is the development of managers. In common with many universities we have developed new programmes for managers at all levels with the management of people as a key element of all of them. Although the initiative in 1995 was clearly "Health and Safety" it has evolved and become integrated into the HR strategy of the university. In England, the Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative from HEFCE has allowed us to invest significantly in all aspect of stress management. The work underway to apply the Investors in People standard to the Corporate Services of the university is also addressing key aspects of stress management, in particular the HSE standard headings of Role, Support, Control and Change.

Support processes are also very important. There will inevitably be individuals who cannot cope and need support, however effective preventive measures are. We have acknowledged that it is in the interests of the university to provide support for staff wherever their problems arise, whether work-related or not. It simply may not be possible to separate work from non-work pressures and either way there is an impact at work regardless of the source. As a result we have provided a wide range of support services for staff.

A stress review group including senior academic staff, senior managers, trade unions and in-house expertise oversees the programme and strategy.

Use of Surveys

We had started the survey approach before the HSE standard was published. We have not adopted local assessment by managers using the standard at this stage. There are issues of competence, confidence and practicality. We are currently considering revised guidance to managers incorporating the standard.

We use OSM, which was developed originally for the NHS but has been applied widely in the public sector and provides useful benchmarks. We are now at the stage of revisiting areas surveyed three years ago to evaluate impact. All staff within a budget centre are surveyed and defined by occupational group, seniority, age, gender. The surveys are conducted by Applied Research Ltd. Response rates vary from approximately 50% to 85%.

Lessons learned

The resource needed to use the survey to best effect is significant.

The amount of preparatory work has a clear impact on return rate and the buy-in of Head of School/Department.

The resource needed to follow up is particularly significant and we have engaged consultants to help us latterly.

It is important to ensure that staff receive feedback from the survey.

Initiatives in response to the survey may take two or more years.

Provision of Support Services

Our services include a Citizens Advice Bureau presence (dealing with debt, legal and financial issues and many more), harassment advisors, a mediation service, counselling. There is also an occupational health service. The most recent innovation has been to introduce a confidential assessment service as the first port of call for staff. People often need guidance to identify their needs and this service is intended to provide a tailored approach. Mediation and harassment advice directly address issues under the heading of Relationships in the HSE standard.

All of our support services are accessed via self-referral, which has consequences for confidentiality and feedback. In discussions and consultation with staff, confidentiality is always a determinant of whether staff will use a service.

Step 4. Record your findings

Institutions are required to record the significant findings of assessments and communicate them effectively to staff.

Risk assessments must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- A proper check was made.
- You asked who might be affected.
- You dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved.
- The precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low.

Step 5. Review and revision

Regularly review the assessments and revise them where necessary.

Further Action

Finally, institutions will have to put in place an action plan detailing what remedial actions will be implemented, as well as a timeframe for review.

For each of the factors identified, the following three questions should be considered:

- What action is being taken already?
- Is this enough?
- What more needs to be done?

Try and identify areas where you can realistically change things within the department. Where appropriate, refer difficulties upwards to encourage solutions to be identified at an organisational level.

If there are a lot of issues, don't try and resolve them all at once. Identify the three or four biggest problems and focus your efforts on these. As these factors improve, you can look at other issues.

(iii) Five Steps to Risk Assessment

HSE guidance stipulates that employers must treat the risk of stress related illness in the same way as any other work-related health risk, then the five steps to risk assessment guidance outlined by the HSE, therefore, apply.

This simple risk assessment-based approach can be achieved by:

Step 1. Look for the hazards

The HSE has identified the following key hazards for work-related stress.

Demands, Control, Relationships, Change, Role, and Support.

You will need to decide which of these are the most significant for your area, and identify the extent of the problem. Sources of information may include:

- Sickness absence – higher or lower than similar departments? Do staff come in when they are unwell? Have you had one or more cases of stress-related illness in the department?
- Staff turnover.
- Performance - higher or lower than it used to be?
- Staff opinions – which factors do your staff perceive to be the most significant?

When this information is disseminated, consider talking to members of your team individually or in a small group. If you have a larger department you might want to use a stress/well-being questionnaire, or the HSE's own analysis questionnaire, to gather information anonymously from a wider group as a starting point for discussion. Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious.

Step 2. Decide who might be harmed, and how

Don't forget:

- Staff with a previous history of stress-related illness who may be at particular risk.
- Staff in departments where large changes are being considered.

Step 3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done

Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. This will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Even after all precautions have been taken, some element of risk can remain. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. If you find that something needs to be done, draw up an action list and give priority to any remaining risks which are high and/or those which could affect most people. In taking action ask yourself:

- a) Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- b) If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

We have recruited a part-time support service manager to co-ordinate the services and ensure that we get useful data to evaluate the service and feedback to the stress management process.

Lessons learned

Staff need regular reminders of the existence of services and what support they can provide.

The perception of the confidentiality of these services is critical.

Counselling is only one aspect of support and is not always the answer. One size does not fit all.

Feedback from these services (in an anonymous form) is critical in providing information on issues of concern and in identifying hotspots.

CONCLUSION

There remains much debate about the nature of stress, its determinants and the best way to deal with it in an occupational setting. There are no simple answers because we are dealing with individuals and their perceptions and feelings and there are many confounding factors. A further complication is the rate of change in the HE sector, making it more difficult to make any longer term comparisons.

It is critical that stress management is not seen as one more initiative that is not relevant to everyday priorities. A key discussion is how to label stress management. Promoting it under a health and safety or occupational health heading may not be the most effective approach. The way people are managed and supported plays a critical role in how people feel and respond to their occupational setting, which firmly links any action to the HR function.

We have taken a pragmatic approach to do what we can to tackle stress in the workplace and continue to learn from our experience. It has to be seen as an iterative process in a rapidly changing and evolving environment. The understanding and evidence base is evolving and we do not predict a steady state in the foreseeable future. Although prevention is always better than cure there remains a significant continuing need for support for staff. The very existence of support is in itself a factor affecting perceptions of staff.

**(ii) Well-Being /Stress
Risk Assessment Checklist**

Devised and developed at
the University of Huddersfield

Stress in the workplace has been identified as a possible 'risk' to the successful operation of the organisation. This questionnaire is an initial attempt to identify any causes that may lead to unacceptable levels of stress within the school or service.

This is an anonymous questionnaire and completion is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to answer any particular questions please leave them blank. We simply seek your perceptions on this issue to help us to make a risk assessment with regard to stress in the workplace, just as we have to with regard to health and safety issues that arise from the physical environment. The results of this survey will be independently collated and analysed before being discussed by senior managers.

Questionnaire

Are you a member of the academic/admin-secretarial/technical or other support staff?

Answer the following questions on a scale of 1-5
where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree.

A. You and your job	
1.	I fit the role that I am supposed to fulfil well.
2.	I feel I have the skills and adaptability that will be required in my job in the foreseeable future.
3.	I am strongly motivated in my work.
4.	I find my job satisfying.
5.	I feel I get sufficient support and training.
6.	I feel I have reasonable job security.
7.	I feel I have realistic expectations of myself.

B. Physical environment in which you work	
1.	My physical environment at work is acceptable.

C. You and the organisation	
1.	I feel the organisation for which I work is supportive.
2.	I do not feel that the organisation makes conflicting demands of me.
3.	Higher education today (i.e. the context in which the university operates) leads to reasonable demands being made of staff.

D. Interpersonal relationships	
1.	Interpersonal relationships in the team in which I work are good.
2.	There are no conflicts between colleagues and me that inhibit the proper conduct of my duties.
3.	I feel that interpersonal conflicts are dealt with well by managers.

E. The work that you do	
1.	What I am expected to do is usually made clear to me.
2.	My line manager exerts a proper degree of control over me.
3.	My line manager is supportive.
4.	My workload is appropriate to the given circumstances.
5.	The pace at which I am required to work is appropriate to the given circumstances.
6.	I am able to organise my work in a way that is appropriate for me.
7.	I have sufficient flexibility to organise my work in a way that allows me to meet the demands of life outside the workplace.

This questionnaire can be applied to a department, school, faculty or even the whole organisation to enable the risk assessment process to be started using the essential information contained in the returned forms.