

University Health & Safety Arrangements: Chapter 35



Management of Stress at Work

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Note.

“Senior Managers” are responsible for health and safety within their organisational unit, specified areas or as a consequence of their activities, and for any additional activities as agreed and delegated to them (e.g. where they accept responsibility for day-to-day safety arrangements for staff who have other line managers, for reasons of geographical or other convenience). They may be Deans, Heads of School, Directors of Institutes, Directors and Heads of Service in non-academic areas, the University Librarian, the Directors of the Manchester Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery, and their equivalents.

Introduction

1. The University is committed to providing a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and wellbeing of all its employees.
2. The University has a duty to manage work-related stress in the same way that it manages more tangible risks such as working at height, with chemicals or using display screen equipment.

Scope

3. This Chapter applies equally to all employees of the University.

Aims

4. The aims of this Chapter are to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable:
 - i. that appropriate measures are in place for the prevention and monitoring of work-related stress; and
 - ii. to ensure the early detection and management of stress where it occurs, whatever the cause. This can include the need to manage individuals who are experiencing stress from causes that are not related to work but which impact on performance at work. The causes may be beyond their control or influence, but managers may make a significant contribution to helping the individual cope; and
 - iii. in particular that:
 - roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for managing stress are clearly defined and understood;
 - managers, employees and relevant support services develop good working practices and co-operate effectively where necessary;
 - managers and employees are provided with information, guidance and support, to enable them to manage situations where stress is experienced;
 - factors which contribute to work-related stress are identified and assessed and relevant measures are introduced to reduce the risk of work-related stress and to control the risk to health; and

- the University measures, monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this Chapter.

Roles and responsibilities

5. The University Board of Governors has overall responsibility for health & safety. The Board is advised on safety, health and environment matters by the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Committee. The SHE Committee's role includes devising policies and action plans, and monitoring compliance and implementation of these for all health and safety arrangements including stress.
6. The University [Health & Safety Policy Statement](#) and Organisation, together with the [Arrangements Chapters](#) set out the principles of how health and safety is managed across the University, and should be referred to for full details.
7. Line managers, in relation to stress, have the following responsibilities:
 - i. to identify and respond appropriately to stress issues within their team, in accordance with this Chapter and supporting guidance;
 - ii. to take steps to ensure that their own management practices and style do not contribute to work-related stress;
 - iii. to be aware of factors which contribute to stress and where possible take reasonable actions to reduce or prevent the impact of work-related stress on themselves and others in work;
 - iv. to take appropriate action when they notice changes in staff behaviour or sickness absence that may indicate a stress related problem;
 - v. to arrange an early referral to Occupational Health. If an early referral has not already been made for any reason, then this should be arranged as soon as possible after 4 weeks of sickness absence.
8. An employee has the responsibility to:
 - i. be aware of factors which contribute to stress and take reasonable actions to reduce or prevent the impact of work-related stress on themselves and others in work;
 - ii. bring to the attention of their line manager, at the earliest opportunity, any concerns they have about work-related stress; and

- iii. inform their line manager if they are suffering from stress.

What is Stress?

9. The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them”.
10. This makes a distinction between pressure, which can be stimulating and motivating, and stress, which occurs when pressures become too great and people feel they cannot cope. Excessive and/or prolonged pressure can have a significant negative impact on work performance and can lead to mental and physical illnesses.
11. People can also experience stress when too few demands are placed on them, for instance if they are bored or feel under-valued.

Prevention

12. The main emphasis should be on preventing stressful working conditions from arising in the first place, by having effective management policies, procedures and practices fully integrated into day to day operations.
13. However, it is recognised that whilst reasonable steps to prevent or minimise stress will be taken, some legitimate, unavoidable and reasonable management interventions and/or working practices or pressures may still be stressful for the employees concerned. The University will provide appropriate information, guidance and training to support managers and employees in dealing with stress.
14. The University Stress Assessment tool is based on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) management standards which describe the main factors that are recognised as having the potential to lead to work-related stress. The University uses an analysis of the biennial staff survey to carry out a stress assessment across the whole organisation. The analysis is consistent with the HSE’s stress management standards.
15. In addition, local stress assessments may be carried out as necessary, by line managers to identify potential causes of stress and reasonable steps which could be taken to reduce or prevent stress. The Guidance for Managers on the Management of Stress provides more details.
16. The University provides a range of other measures to prevent stress including:
 - staff development programmes designed to help staff work effectively and to build the skills and ability to cope with the demands of their roles;

- staff network groups to help identify potential causes for concern;
- the promotion of wellbeing awareness and a host of fitness and mental health activities provided across campus.

Support

17. The University will offer support mechanisms for those who do experience stress, whether it is work-related, personal or a mix of both. The Guidance for Staff on the Management of Stress provides more details.

18. The following University services will co-operate to effectively support the line manager and/or the employee to manage incidences of employee stress:

- i. Occupational Health Services;
- ii. Counselling Service;
- iii. Human Resources;
- iv. Staff Disability Support Adviser; and
- v. Campus Trade Unions.

Monitoring

19. The University will monitor the implementation of this Chapter through the biennial Staff Survey results. The effects will be measured through key performance indicators (KPIs). The outcomes of which will be analysed to produce a stress report and further action plans as necessary.

Review

20. This Chapter will be reviewed every two years.

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