**Individual stress risk assessment - Talking Toolkit**

This talking toolkit is designed to support conversations to prevent and reduce work-related stress and is based on the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards. Preventing work-related stress forms a key part of ‘[Our Wellbeing Commitment](https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/protected/display.aspx?DocID=72384)’ and, as an employer, we have a legal duty to assess the risk of work-related stress and put steps in place to tackle those risks.

The talking toolkit template is designed to support one-to-one conversations with team members and covers the six different areas that have the potential to cause work-related stress if not correctly managed – this is called a stress risk assessment.

There is no strict format for these conversations and the layout of the toolkit is not prescriptive. However, line managers should listen to what is being said, rather than trying to offer explanations or excuses. Action points and solutions should be agreed together – the key thing is to start talking and create a plan for managing those factors that have the potential to or are leading to work-related stress. The earlier a problem is tackled the less impact it will have on the health and wellbeing of colleagues and taking action can bring the University benefits such as reduced sickness absence, boosting morale and improving productivity.

The talking toolkit template may get completed:

* Because a manager or colleague has identified signs and symptoms of stress in an individual
* A colleague has spoken to their manager or other colleague about feeling overwhelmed, having symptoms of stress or feeling that they are experiencing excessive pressure at work
* As part of a recommendation by Occupational Health (OH) or Disability Advisory Support Service (DASS)
* Because of a sickness absence and planning the return to work.

There may be some situations where a nominated individual completes the template with a colleague, rather than their line manager. In all scenarios, please ensure that you provide sufficient time to complete the assessment - it may be better to meet on more than one occasion. It is also helpful to provide this template to the individual before your first meeting.

Please refer to the guidance on completing on completing the talking toolkit template.

**CONVERSATION ONE: DEMANDS**

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| How a colleague should feel at work | * They are able to cope with the demands of the job
* They are provided with achievable demands in relation to the hours they work
* Their skills and abilities are matched to the demands of their job
* Concerns about the work environment are addressed
 |
| Go through the following questions with the individual or those that are relevant to the situation |
| Does your workload feel achievable? Think about which tasks take up the most time and how you feel at busy times |
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| Do you feel the deadlines you are given are realistic? Are you able to perform your tasks in your normal working hours? |
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| Do you often have conflicting deadlines? |
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| Do you have any concerns about your working environment? How have these been addressed? |
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| Have you had the right training to carry out the core functions of your job? |
|  |
| Discuss what improvements or support could be put in place to help with any issues that have been raised and then together agree the action plan *(you may find it helpful to refer to the manager guidance, which provides examples of steps that can be taken to best manage work demands)* |
| *What?* | *Who?* | *When?* |
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| Set a date to revisit these actions |  |

**CONVERSATION TWO: CONTROL**

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| How a colleague should feel at work | * They are consulted over the way their work is organised and undertaken, e.g. through regular meetings, one-to-ones, performance reviews.
* They have regular opportunities for discussion and input at the start of projects or new pieces of work.
* They are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work.
* They are consulted over things affecting their work.
* They are encouraged to develop new skills and undertake new and challenging pieces of work.
 |
| Go through the following questions with the individual or those that are relevant to the situation |
| Do you feel involved in how decisions about your job are made? Think about whether you feel listened to and trusted, how you are consulted and any opportunities for input.  |
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| Do you have regular meetings and opportunities to consult with your line manager and peers on how you do your job? |
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| Do you feel your skills are used to good effect? How could your existing skills be used more effectively? |
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| Do you feel you have a say in how your work is organised and undertaken? |
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| Discuss what improvements or support could be put in place to help with any issues that have been raised and then together agree the action plan *(you may find it helpful to refer to the manager guidance, which provides examples of steps that can be taken to best manage issues related to control)* |
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**CONVERSATION THREE: SUPPORT**

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| How a colleague should feel at work | * They receive information and support from other employees and their managers.
* The University has systems in place to enable and encourage managers to support their employees and for employees to support one another.
* They know what support is available and how to access it.
* They know how to access the resources they need.
* They receive regular and constructive feedback.
 |
| Go through the following questions with the individual or those that are relevant to the situation |
| Do you feel that your area of the University is a positive place to work and that you are valued? Think about the working environment, the support available and the opportunities to talk about support you may need. |
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| Do you know who to talk to and where to go when you need support? Think about where you would go for help if you were experiencing an issue and whether you would feel comfortable doing so. |
|  |
| Do you feel there are enough opportunities to discuss any emerging issues or pressures? |
|  |
| Do you feel you receive regular constructive feedback? |
|  |
| Discuss what improvements or support could be put in place to help with any issues that have been raised and then together agree the action plan *(you may find it helpful to refer to the manager guidance, which provides examples of steps that can be taken to provide sufficient support at work)* |
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**CONVERSATION FOUR: RELATIONSHIPS**

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| How a colleague should feel at work | * They are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours such as bullying or harassment at work.
* The university promotes positive behaviours at work.
* The university has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour.
* The university has systems in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour.
* The university has systems in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.
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| Go through the following questions with the individual or those that are relevant to the situation |
| Have you experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour at work? Do you feel satisfied with how this was dealt with? |
|  |
| Do you feel that honest, open communication is encouraged in the team / our area of the University? |
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| Do you feel that you know where to go and what to do if you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour? Do you feel confident to report unacceptable behaviour? Do you feel confident that steps will be taken to stop this behaviour? |
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| Discuss what improvements or support could be put in place to help with any issues that have been raised and then together agree the action plan *(you may find it helpful to refer to the manager guidance, which provides examples of steps that can be taken to help create positive workplace relationships)* |
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**CONVERSATION FIVE: ROLE**

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| How a colleague should feel at work | * They understand their role and responsibilities.
* The university provides information to enable them to understand their role and all of their responsibilities.
* The requirements the university places on them are clear.
* They are able to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities through the systems that the university has in place.
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| Go through the following questions with the individual or those that are relevant to the situation |
| Do you feel clear on what your role and responsibilities are? Do you know where to access these? |
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| Are you clear on what your performance objectives are and what success looks like for you, your area/department and the University? Do you feel that they are achievable? |
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| Do you feel you understand how work is structured in your area of the University? Do you know who is doing what and why and how your role fits in with the wider aims of the University? |
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| If you had an issue with something within your role would you feel comfortable raising it? Do you feel confident that steps would be taken to address the issue? |
|  |
| Discuss what improvements or support could be put in place to help with any issues that have been raised and then together agree the action plan *(you may find it helpful to refer to the manager guidance, which provides examples of steps that can be taken to ensure role clarity and purpose)* |
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**CONVERSATION SIX: CHANGE**

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| How a colleague should feel at work | * The University engages with them frequently when undergoing change.
* They are provided with timely information, enabling them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
* They are consulted on changes and provided with opportunities for them to influence proposals.
* They are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their job and, if necessary, they are given training to support any changes in their job.
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| Go through the following questions with the individual or those that are relevant to the situation |
| Do you feel that the University handles change well? |
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| Do you feel you are properly consulted when changes are made which affect you and your role? Do you feel the reasons for the change are explained well? Do you feel the timeframe for change is reasonable and gives you ample opportunity to feed in and address any gaps? |
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| Do you feel your opinions on the change and any issues/gaps identified are addressed? Do you feel that you are involved in the planning process when changes are made? |
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| Do you feel you are given adequate training and support before and during change? |
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| Discuss what improvements or support could be put in place to help with any issues that have been raised and then together agree the action plan *(you may find it helpful to refer to the manager guidance, which provides examples of steps that can be taken to best manage change)* |
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