

## School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science

### Stress Management Policy

#### Purpose

The purpose of the Policy is:

- To describe the School's approach to the management of stress
- To define key responsibilities in relation to the management of stress
- To ensure that systems are in place to identify stress and to ensure that staff are fully supported
- To ensure compliance with all health and safety legislation

#### Statement of Commitment

The School is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its Staff. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress.

The School is committed to promoting a good, supportive climate and healthy working culture, where stress is not seen as a personal weakness, and where employees experiencing stress or mental health problems can access appropriate support.

#### Aims and Objectives

- The School will identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- The School will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- Creating a co-operative and supportive environment, through a culture of consultation, participation and open communication
- Ensuring good communications within teams
- Raise awareness of staff about stress, its causes and effects
- Enabling staff to report excessive workloads, interpersonal pressures and symptoms of stress without fear of discrimination
- Supporting staff in recovering from stress-related illnesses and managing the return to work after any period of sick leave so that stress does not recur.
- Provide opportunities for employees to maintain and promote health and well-being
- To respond where practicable to requests for flexible working arrangements
- To increase general awareness of stress and methods to prevent and combat harmful, excessive workplace stressors.

- Seek to manage pressures which may affect employees by anticipating likely problems and taking actions to reduce the effects of them and any impact on colleagues. Pressures may be associated with such problems as:
  - Poor job design / lack of role clarity
  - Lack of control over workload
  - Working environment
  - Job insecurity
  - Poor workplace relationships
  - Unsupportive management culture
  - Lack of training or support
  - Not enough work
  - Overwork / excessive hours.

## Legal Framework

The law requires employers to tackle stress:

- **Under The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:** To assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities
- **Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:** To take measures to control the risk.

The HSE expects organisations to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for stress, and to take action to tackle any problems identified by that risk assessment.

## Definitions

### Stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

### Stressors

The common term for these excessive pressures or demands is ‘stressors’ and a person’s reaction to a stressor is termed a ‘stress response’. However there is a clear difference between stress and pressure: the former can be detrimental to health: the latter, if managed correctly, can be positive, challenging and motivating in the workplace.

### Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment is the process used between the individual and their line manager to evaluate the hazard/risk and to determine whether precautions are adequate or if more should be done.

## Health and Safety Executive Management Standards

The School will use the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards for Work Related Stress to assist in the reduction of workplace stress. It identifies the following six key potential stressors at work that, if properly managed proactively, can help to reduce work-related stress:

- **Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
- **Control** – such as how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- **Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Role** – such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- **Change** – such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

## Responsibilities

### Employees

All employees have a responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to protect their own health and safety and that of their colleagues. This includes:

- Raise issues of concern with their line manager or alternative person in the School.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended
- Minimising excessive pressures and demands on themselves and others by behaving responsibly and acting reasonably
- Ensuring that they identify where training and developmental needs or other appropriate support may be required in order to meet the demands of their job, and undertake the training.
- Contributing positively to the appraisal process and to use it as a tool to communicate any concerns to their reviewer.
- Recognising and managing external issues that may impact and take steps to minimise the impact on work by using the appropriate methods.
- Recognising the early signs of emotional distress behaviours likely to lead to ill health from work related stress in colleagues, offering support and encouraging discussion with their manager and/or referral to the Occupational Health Department.
- Ensuring that they are familiar with the stress policy and participate in the stress risk assessment process when asked.
- Take annual leave
- Submit a USP1 Form after sick leave.

### Head of School

The Head of School shall have overall responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of all staff in SAGES in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and will ensure that this policy is

effectively implemented and supported by all Managers and staff. The Head of School is responsible for:

- Implementing the stress policy
- Ensuring that senior managers take reasonable steps to tackle identified workplace stress
- Where workplace stress is a problem. Develop local action plans for the prevention and control of workplace stress as part of the schools legal responsibilities for health and safety and its duty of care to employees.
- Ensure feedback on the management of stress is discussed in the Stress Management Group
- Ensuring Reports are tabled at Management Board, Wellbeing, H&S and Departmental meetings
- Writing and reviewing annually the school stress risk assessment
- Ensuring annual PDR's take place and identifying issues that could be potential stressors that require action.
- Ensuring good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- To monitor annual summary from HR of leavers' survey data and act upon findings related to stress.

## Managers

Managers have a critical role in offering support to employees and in facilitating support from elsewhere as necessary. Managers are not expected to take on the role of counsellors but will be expected to use good communication skills when addressing stress-related issues. Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring Occupational Health referrals take place when required.
- Ensuring staff are fully trained to carry out their duties.
- Ensuring staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitoring workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitoring working hours to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- Monitoring annual leave to ensure staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attending training as requested in good management practice and health and safety
- Ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.
- Being vigilant and offering additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Undertaking return to work interviews following sickness absence to establish if any stress-related problems are responsible for the absence.
- Managing implementation of the action plan and specific interventions as indicated by the risk assessment.
- Referring where necessary all employees experiencing stress-related symptoms for further help, advice and support to either Occupational Health, staff counselling or recommending a visit to their GP.
- Completing an individual stress risk assessment on all individuals to be experiencing stress and the development of agreed action plans.
- Ensure that employees are recruited to/employed in roles for which they are suited
- Ensuring that all individual stress risk assessments are sent to the Executive Administration Manager for confidential storage.

## Health and Safety Coordinator

- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments
- Inform the Head of School and Health and Safety Committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work
- Conduct six monthly audits on compliance of the policy
- Write the reports for the H&S, WED, Management Board and Departmental meetings.

## Executive Administration Manager

- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics and individual stress risk assessments
- Maintaining secure confidential staff files related to stress.
- Ensure all PDR reviews take place and completed paper work is submitted to the Head of School in a timely fashion.
- Ensure all staff have access to senior management or Head of School to discuss issues concerning them.
- Ensuring Reports are tabled at Management Board, Wellbeing, Health and Safety Committee and Departmental meetings
- To obtain training records of the 'Managing Stress' online training module and any other appropriate courses.

## Stress Management Working Group

The Stress Management Working Group will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented and will meet twice yearly. Membership will consist of the Head of School, Health and Safety Coordinator, Executive Administration Manager, Head of Quest and the Heads of Department. They will:

- Oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.
- Review the findings of the six monthly audit
- Develop and implement action plan from the Survey.
- Submit tabled reports to Management Board, Wellbeing, Health and Safety Committee and Department Management meetings.

## Management of Staff suffering from work-related stress

The School acknowledges that stress experience is unique and personal to each individual. What is relaxing to one person may be stressful to another. The School acknowledges that there is a need to proactively assess the risk in the work environment to ensure measures are put in place to keep

stress to a minimum for all staff but also a need for individual assessment for staff who are exhibiting signs of stress. This dual approach includes:

- The proactive risk assessment for stress within the School to include work areas, environment and teams – School stress risk assessment checklist; and
- The individual stress risk assessment for stress in an individual – individual stress risk assessment checklist

## **School Stress Risk Assessment**

The Head of School will undertake, and review annually or sooner if concerns are raised about stress in the workplace, a school stress risk assessment. This will take into account sources of information which may identify workplace stressors. Undertaking the risk assessment will ensure factors that are likely to cause intense or sustained levels of work-related stress are identified together with any existing controls in place. Where significant risks are identified, the information gathered should be reported to the relevant staff.

An anonymous survey will be circulated annually to the School. Consideration should be given to the most effective means of engaging staff.

Results will be discussed with the members of the Stress Management Working Group. Membership will consist of the Head of School, Heads of Department, Head of Quest, Head of Administration and the Health and Safety Coordinator to discuss the results and actions.

## **Individual Stress Risk Assessment**

An employee may raise any stress-related issues about themselves or a colleague with any of the following:

- Their Line Manager
- HR
- Occupational Health
- Head of Department
- Head of School
- Another Manager

Once it has been identified that an employee is suffering from work-related stress their line manager must ensure action is taken to explore and address the issues raised. Managers should listen to the employee's concerns and offer support and reassurance and identify whether it is related to work or non-work issues. An individual stress risk assessment form should be completed. In liaison with HR, risk reduction measures can be implemented to eliminate or minimise the likelihood of those risks re-occurring.

If an individual feels that their line manager is contributing to their work-related stress then the individual should approach another senior member of the team to assist with the completion of the stress risk assessment.

Where a manager is unaware that an employee is experiencing work-related stress and an employee has a sickness episode in which stress has been identified as the causal factor a stress risk assessment must be completed upon their return to work.

Where an employee is absent from work and is experiencing work-related stress at a level that triggers action in accordance with the Universities Sickness Absence Policy, a referral to Occupational Health should be made. The management referral form should be completed and sent to the OH department. The OH Team will see the employee and ensure that the manager has completed an individual stress risk assessment with the affected individual on their return to work.

Where the risk assessment identifies ongoing concerns as expressed by the manager or member of staff, a referral to the Occupational Health department must be made together with the completed stress risk assessment. A copy should also be sent to the Executive Administration Manager for confidential filing. This must be with the full consent of the employee. A completed stress risk assessment must always be completed before a referral to OH is made.

Actions to remove or reduce stress will then be discussed and implemented wherever possible. Progress will be reviewed after an appropriate period. Normally no more than one month. If after three months there has been no improvements HR will be informed to enable them to identify whether any management performance or employee relations issues are present.

## Monitoring

An audit of compliance with the policy requirements will be undertaken six monthly by the Health and Safety Coordinator. This will include review of:

- Number of referrals to OHD for stress related issues
- Number of individual stress risk assessments received by Executive Administration Manager
- Stressors identified as demands, control, support, relationships, role, change or non-work-related.
- Number of completed 'Managing Stress' online training module
- Leavers' survey data

The findings will be reported to the Stress Management Working Group. Tabled reports will then be sent to WED, Health and Safety committee, Head of Department Meetings and School Management Board.

Where any stressors are identified, an action plan with timescales will be developed and implementation of actions will be monitored by the Stress Management Working Group. The action plan will include a plan for dissemination of findings to appropriate staff.

## Equality and Diversity

The School is committed to ensuring equality; diversity and inclusion are fully embedded throughout the organisation.

## Communication

This policy will be made available on the School Shared information Drive (SID) and be readily available in hard copy for staff on request.

'Working Saguely' will make reference to the policy with a link to the document.

# Appendix 1

## Identifying Stress

It is recognised that individuals have different strengths and weaknesses and differing abilities to cope with pressure. These differing responses can make it difficult to determine an individual's susceptibility to work-related stress. Common psychological, physical and behavioural signs of stress include poor concentration, irritability, headaches, insomnia and increased sickness absence.

Managers should consider the following data sources to identify whether there are any indications of workplace stress:

- Staff Survey results
- Sickness absence
- Staff turnover
- Exit interviews
- Harassment and bullying reporting or grievances
- Accidents/incidents at work
- Occupational Health referrals
- Workload model

Managers can't guess if an employee is feeling stressed, however identifying changes in behaviour or performance could be an indicator and should alert them to a potential problem.

It is important to recognise the causes of excessive pressure so that they can be avoided or minimised. There may be occasions however, when the source of stress is unavoidable and in these circumstances careful management is necessary to prevent employees becoming unwell as a result.

### Recognising the signs of stress in yourself and others

#### What to look for in yourself:

Physical Signs	Emotional Signs
Headaches Tension Indigestion Breathlessness Rashes Frequent colds Recurrence of previous illness Sleep disturbances Dizziness Dry mouth	Irritability Tension Moodiness Alienation Dissatisfaction Tearful Anxious Withdrawal
Mental Signs	Behavioural Signs
Inability to concentrate Worrying Mistakes Muddled thinking	Unsociability Restlessness Lying Reckless driving

Persistent negative thinking Nervousness	Increased drinking or smoking Change in appetite
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**What to look for in others:**

<b>Work Performance</b>	<b>Emotional Behaviour</b>
Inability to concentrate Loss of enthusiasm Declining/inconsistent performance Failing to take annual leave Accidents	Crying Aggressive behaviour Over-reaction to problems Sudden mood changes Irritability/moodiness
<b>Withdrawal</b>	<b>Relationships</b>
Reluctance to give or offer support Arriving late and leaving early Extended lunches Absenteeism	Criticism of others Lack of co-operation Marital or family difficulties Poor employee relations

**Appendix 2 Guidance for Employees**

Anyone can suffer from work-related stress, no matter what work they do. The earlier that it is recognised and addressed, the easier it is to deal with. The flowchart at the end will provide you with some simple steps to follow.

Visit the HR website for further information: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/>

## Talk it through

### Talk to your line manager or a friend or colleague:

If you are feeling stressed, the best thing you can do is talk to someone. You may feel unable to talk to your line manager about how you are feeling and you may find it useful to talk to a friend/colleague or independent person who could act as a mediator or provide alternative support in some way. Raising issues with your line manager is important, as they have responsibility for you and your work. You may decide that it is best to meet with your manager's manager. Consider ways in which the meeting could be made easier e.g.: holding the meeting in a neutral location, bringing a colleague or trade union representative to the meeting. You might also find it helpful to talk things through with your GP.

### Discuss work issues:

You should discuss whether work has contributed to you feeling stressed. Consider what particular aspects of the job may cause you stress/ make you feel anxious. You may have some practical suggestions about what can be done about these. Think about how you would like your work to be monitored. What goals are realistic in the circumstances? How would you like your work to be monitored and at what frequency?

### Discuss outside of work issues:

Whilst you do not have to reveal issues external to work, it may be helpful to let your line manager or others know about issues that are affecting you and may impact your work. If you are willing to discuss your medical care, it may be useful for you to let your line manager know certain aspects of this e.g. side effects of medication which might impact on your work.

### If you are signed off from work by your GP:

The University's Health and Wellbeing Policy contains useful information for managers and employees on how to manage sickness absence. If your GP signs you off from work, you should inform your line manager as soon as possible. It is important that you maintain regular contact with your line manager whilst you are absent from work. If you are signed off work due to stress (either work-related or due to personal issues), your line manager will automatically refer you to Occupational Health where both you and your manager can obtain support, advice and guidance.

## Professional support

There are a number of different professional support and service providers that you can access through the University, all of which are available to support you such as **The Employee Assistance Programme – Confidential Care**. It gives you a place to turn for support any time of day or night, 365 days a year. Support is available for whatever issues you might be facing, including work stress,

depression, marriage and relationship issues, legal concerns, coping with change, parenting issues, financial problems, health issues and much more.

It also offers a comprehensive wellbeing resource "well online", which offers information and advice to help you optimise your health and wellbeing. For further information visit their website [www.wellonline.co.uk](http://www.wellonline.co.uk) . **Username:** URlogin **Password:** wellbeing, or phone 0800 085 1376.

You can complete the 'Managing Stress' on-line training module:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/people-development/humres-people-development.aspx>

You can also visit the Supporting You webpage and find information on H.A.R.C (Health Advocacy Respect and Care) and Harassment Advisors:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/supportingyou/sp-supporting-you.aspx>

The HR Partner/Advisory team provides managers and employees with specific support and guidance about how best to manage each individual case. They can talk through the different options available and guide you through the right approach, as well as providing advice on making a referral to Occupational Health, on the counselling support available and on the appropriate training courses available.

You and your manager may agree that a referral to the University's Occupational Health service would be helpful. They can provide you with specific advice and guidance on how to manage stress, they can also provide advice and guidance to your manager. It is usual that Occupational Health will make an appointment to see you in person and you and your manager will both be sent a copy of a management report after this appointment. Depending on the situation, the management report may include advice and guidance on managing your return to work from sickness absence, advice and guidance on workplace adjustments and on any other issues that have been raised by either you or your manager.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Guidance for Managers – Handling a case of Work Related Stress**

As with any health problem, stress needs to be handled with sensitivity. An individual may be concerned that by telling their manager that they feel stressed it may amount to an admission that they are 'not up to the job'. As a manager you should reassure the individual and arrange to speak to them, privately about their concerns. On some occasions it may be more appropriate that a colleague or your line manager discusses the issues, particularly if you have a difficult relationship with the employee. You should be prepared for the fact that some employees may be reluctant to talk e.g. due concerns about being judged or how the situation may impact their job.

A stress related case will be brought your attention in one of the following ways:

- An individual will raise a stress related issue with you
- You raise concerns that an individual may be showing signs of stress
- The individual is off sick with a stress related case

There are five main stages in dealing with a stress related case:

## 1. Listening

Sometimes all it needs is a sympathetic ear and someone to give reassurance to resolve the situation without taking it further to a risk assessment. You may find that the problem is more serious, in which case you will need to take advice from HR and Occupational Health.

## 2. Exploration and Risk Assessment

Keep the meeting informal and use open questions to help identify what is causing the stress. For example:

- What is causing the stress?
- What is the impact of the stress?
- How is it affecting them?
- What solutions do they think might help?

You should discuss whether it is work that is causing the stress or whether it is issues outside of work. Don't put pressure on the employee to reveal issues external to work, you may suggest that it could be helpful to know so you can offer further help and support at work. In some cases you may feel a specialist professional would be better able to help, and it may be appropriate to refer them to the Employee Assistance Programme – Confidential Care. It gives you a place to turn for support any time of day or night, 365 days a year. Support is available for whatever issues you might be facing, including work stress, depression, marriage and relationship issues, legal concerns, coping with change, parenting issues, financial problems, health issues and much more.

It also offers a comprehensive wellbeing resource "well online", which offers information and advice to help you optimise your health and wellbeing. For further information visit their website [www.wellonline.co.uk](http://www.wellonline.co.uk) . **Username:** URlogin **Password:** wellbeing, or phone 0800 085 1376.

You can also refer staff to the 'Managing Stress' on-line training module:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/people-development/humres-people-development.aspx>

**Make sure the employee is aware of other support that the University can provide:**

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/supportingyou/sp-supporting-you.aspx>

### **3. Actions**

Discuss with the employee suggestions about short term or longer term adjustments to their work that may be helpful. This may include things like:

- Re-negotiation of work deadlines
- Re-assigning pieces of work
- A period of leave
- Training
- Referring the individual to see his/her GP
- Refer to Occupational Health (You must complete the individual stress risk assessment beforehand)
- Regular meeting with their Manager

Any actions and solutions should be noted and a date to review progress agreed. It is important to ensure the situation is being managed effectively and that agreed actions are realistic and achievable considering the resources available.

### **4. Follow up**

Any agreed actions should be followed up and regular progress meetings arranged and recorded. This may be done through regular meetings.

### **5. What if the situation does not improve?**

Having gone through the first four stages and there is no sign of improvement you may need to consider contacting HR.

Your HR Partner will be able to provide managers with specific support and guidance about how best to manage each individual case. They can talk through the different options available and guide you through the right approach. They can provide advice on making a referral to Occupational Health, on the counselling support available and on the appropriate training courses available.

If you refer an employee to Occupational Health they will make an appointment with the employee and send you a copy of the management report. Depending on the situation and the questions you have asked in the referral, the management report may include advice and guidance on managing an employee returning to work from sickness absence, advice and guidance on workplace adjustments and on any other issues that have been raised by either you or the employee.

