School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences

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 employees. 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

Head of School

The Head of School shall have overall responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of all staff in SMPCS 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 Council, 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. All data will be anonymised.

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 the Occupational Health, staff counselling or their own 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.

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 occupational health
- 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.
- Contributing positively to the appraisal process and to use it as a tool to communicate any concerns to their manager.
- 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.

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, Council and Departmental meetings.

Executive Administration Manager

- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating anonymised sickness absence statistics and individual stress risk assessments
- 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 the School Executive Board, WIDE, Athena Swan, Health and Safety Committee and Departmental meetings
- To obtain training records of the 'Managing Stress' online training module.

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, Heads of Department and the Director of WIDE. 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
- Submit tabled reports to the School Executive Board, WIDE, Athena Swan, Health and Safety Committee and Departmental 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 causative 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 send 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 the Executive 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 Website and be readily available in hard copy for staff on request.