



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Stress in the Workplace Policy

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1. Purpose

1.1 The University is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue.

1.2 The University acknowledges the importance of identifying workplace stressors and aims to achieve the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards as a means of reducing workplace stress, along with providing other suitable interventions.

1.3 The University also acknowledges that employees may experience stressful situations in their personal life which have an effect on their working life and will provide support whenever possible.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the University. Line Managers are responsible for implementation and the University is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

3. Definition of work-related stress

3.1 Work-related stress is defined by the HSE as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them at work”. Work-related stress is not an illness, but a state and it can lead to increased problems with physical and psychological ill health if it is prolonged or particularly intense. The ability of individuals to deal with pressure will vary, however, in principle anyone can be affected by work-related stress.

3.2 It is, however, important to make the distinction between pressure and stress. There are beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge, which can be stimulating and motivating. Work-related stress is the natural but distressing reaction to demands or pressures that a person perceives they cannot cope with at a given time.

3.3 A number of potential causes of occupational stress (stressors) have been identified as follows:

Demands - such as workload and exposure to physical hazards

Control - how much say the person has in the way they do their work

Support - from peers and line management

Relationships - promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Role - whether individuals understand their role in the organisation and ensuring they do not have conflicting roles

Change - how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation together with factors unique to the individual

4. Reducing the risk of workplace stress

In order to reduce the risk of work-related stress the University will, through the successful implementation of this policy:

- 4.1** Encourage a culture where stress is not seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence.
- 4.2** Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that excessive stress is eliminated from the work environment through undertaking organisational risk assessments and introducing effective stress management systems. Also, where risk assessments identify excessive stressors the University will take action to reduce this to the lowest practicable level.
- 4.3** Provide suitable training and guidance for managers and key staff to enable them to recognise symptoms of negative stress in their staff and themselves.
- 4.4** Provide suitable training and guidance for managers and key staff to enable them to arrange for the implementation of effective control measures where appropriate
- 4.5** Provide information and training for staff in general on the effects of stress at work.
- 4.6** Promote the benefits of the University's sports and recreational facilities and encourage good health and wellbeing.
- 4.7** Encourage a working environment where members of staff who feel they are suffering from the negative effects of stress can approach their manager (or other key staff as appropriate) in confidence, in order that the problem can be resolved or the necessary support mechanisms put in place.
- 4.8** Provide suitable support mechanisms for members of staff suffering from the negative effects of stress. These mechanisms will be confidential and structured to suit the needs of the sufferer and may include referral to the University's Occupational Health Service.
- 4.9** Ensure adequate arrangements are in place to manage an employee's return to work after periods of absence. Guidance can be found in Manager's Guide for dealing with cases of stress in the workplace.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Senior Managers

To ensure that the University's policy is implemented and where necessary seek centrally provided resources directing them as appropriate within their own College / Service Area.

5.2 Line Managers

5.2.1 To treat sympathetically any member of staff who reports that they are suffering from stress ensuring that immediate action is taken in line with the Manager's Guide for dealing with cases of stress in the workplace. Notifying the Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC) as soon as possible of any cases of work-related stress.

5.2.2 To be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress, through attending relevant training and briefing sessions.

5.2.3 To encourage staff to seek support and advice regarding illness and stress as soon as possible.

5.2.4 To carry out effective risk assessments on the possible sources of stress in their area to identify areas for improvement.

5.2.5 To develop and implement suitable safeguards and improved practices in consultation with all relevant stakeholders when sources of stress have been identified.

5.2.6 To ensure that the selection process enables the right person to be placed in the right job and to provide adequate support through the induction period.

5.2.7 To ensure that all staff have adequate training to enable them to undertake their jobs safely and effectively.

5.2.8 To ensure that employees have an appraisal which gives clearly defined objectives and responsibilities and that they are regularly updated in light of changing requirements.

5.2.9 To ensure that all staff receive regular sensitive and constructive feedback on their performance, ensuring that the discussion is a two-way process as laid out in the staff appraisal schemes.

5.2.10 To ensure that staff in their areas are not overloaded, by monitoring their workload and working hours via an agreed system that is transparent to all employees in their area of control. This should also take into account the level of experience of individual members of staff.

5.2.11 To review their existing communication processes to assess how effective these are in keeping individuals up to date with key issues which affect their jobs and enable individuals to provide feedback and be actively involved in decisions that affect them.

5.2.12 To ensure that bullying and/or harassment is not tolerated.

5.2.13 To ensure that staff are able to take their contractual annual leave allowance. Guidance on annual leave can be found in the Annual Leave policy.

5.2.14 To attend training in good management practice and health and safety as required.

5.2.15 To undertake return to work discussions with all staff following sickness absence, regardless of the reason for the absence, in order to establish whether stress has been a contributory factor to the absence.

5.2.16 To notify their own Line Manager of any difficulties which arise from the implementation of this policy.

5.3 Employees

5.3.1 To read the handout 'Working together to reduce stress at work' produced by the Stress Management Association, which is available on the University portal page - Working together to reduce stress.

5.3.2 To try, wherever possible to notify their manager (or other key staff as appropriate) of any situation within their workplace which they perceive as being stressful.

5.3.3 To undertake any training provided which is aimed at raising awareness of stress-related issues.

5.3.4 To participate in any training provided which will help them to undertake their job safely and effectively.

5.3.5 To take all reasonable steps to ensure their actions do not cause unacceptable stress to others and to encourage others to follow these guidelines.

5.3.6 To attend meetings with their Line Manager and PPC Representative to help identify the causes of stress when it arises and to attend any subsequent review meetings when a strategy has been agreed (accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or work colleague if desired).

5.3.7 To attend any meetings with Occupational Health when requested, following discussion and agreement with their Line Manager and PPC Representative.

5.3.8 To give consideration to the offer of counselling through the University, arrange counselling from their own health support system or find other suitable means of support when counselling is recommended.

5.3.9 To co-operate with any recommended changes in work practice aimed at countering or alleviating workplace stress.

5.4 Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC)

5.4.1 To assist Line Managers in addressing areas of concern relating to work-related stress.

5.4.2 To provide support and information to any individual who reports that they are suffering from stress ensuring that they are aware of the University's procedures in this regard and the support mechanisms available.

5.4.3 To support Line Managers in the production and implementation of a proactive plan which addresses any issues identified through statistical analysis or otherwise.

5.4.4 To regularly review and revise existing PPC policies and procedures in relation to their impact on stress in the workplace and introduce new policies as and when required.

5.4.5 To liaise with all parties involved in managing cases of stress i.e. the individual, the Line Manager, Occupational Health, the Health and Safety Department, Trade Union representatives and any external support providers to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

5.4.6 To provide appropriate information and training programmes for managers and employees in order to assist in the management of work-related stress and to promote stress awareness.

5.4.7 To ensure that anti-bullying and harassment responsibilities are understood, and any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with through the relevant policy

5.4.8 To support Line Managers in dealing with cases of stress in the workplace ensuring that suitable support strategies are implemented and that progress reviews take place.

5.5 Occupational Health

5.5.1 To provide advice to PPC representatives and Line Managers when requested with regard to the management of individual members of staff who are experiencing work-related stress.

5.5.2 To assess any psychological support provided to employees and facilitate an onward referral to other specialists or suitable external agencies when appropriate, e.g. counselling.

5.5.3 To undertake workplace assessments, when deemed appropriate and provide advice on strategies for reducing work-related stressors, whatever they may be.

5.5.4 To provide advice to members of the Organisational Development Team on the content of any training courses which are aimed at reducing work-related stress.

5.5.5 To undertake appropriate and effective pre-employment health checks of all prospective employees to ensure that suitable support mechanisms can be put in place when any pre-existing conditions are identified.

5.6 Health and Safety Department

5.6.1 To provide advice and / or assistance regarding the minimisation of the negative effect of environmental stressors, such as: heat, workstation design, lighting, etc. either on request or as part of their regular workplace assessments (Guidance can be found in the University's Health & Safety Policies).

5.6.2 To provide advice and assist managers to undertake risk assessments relating to psychological health.

5.6.3 To liaise with the Department of PPC in order to achieve a co-ordinated approach to stress reduction strategies.

5.7 Trade Union Representatives

5.7.1 To provide confidential help and assistance on stress related problems through local representatives.

6. Function of Union Safety Representatives

6.1 Union Safety Representatives will be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.

6.2 Union Safety Representatives must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys.

6.3 Union Safety Representatives must be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process.

7. Policy Implementation Review

7.1 The Department of PPC will take a lead role in ensuring the policy and supporting interventions are implemented.

7.2 The Joint Health and Safety Consultative Committee and Health and Safety Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote health and safety in the workplace. This will include monitoring the outcomes of stress risk assessments, stress related absence statistics and the attendance of any associated training courses.

8. Related Policies and Guides

The following guides and policies can be found on the University portal:

- Manager's Guide for dealing with cases of stress in the workplace
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy

9. References

HSE Management Standards for Stress. November 2004

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>

Working together to reduce stress at work November 2008

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg424.pdf>

Tackling work-related stress using the Management Standards approach

A step-by-step workbook. HSE March 2017

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.htm>

Management of Health and Safety at Work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 2013. HSE 2013

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg65.htm>

How to tackle Work-Related Stress. HSE 2009

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg430.pdf>

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