



## **STRESS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

Keele University is highly committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

The University recognises that work-related stress is a health and safety issue and that it can have a harmful effect on personal health, work performance and general quality of life. It acknowledges its legal duty to take all reasonable steps to identify sources of stress in the workplace and take action to reduce or eliminate the causes of stress within its control.

Therefore the prevention and effective management of work related stress is essential to the University's responsibility to its staff and to the role of those who have work-related responsibility for others.

The measures set out in this policy (with links to operational guidance) aim to reduce and address the primary causes of work related stress. It is accepted that there is no ready-made solution and causes can be very diverse.

This policy applies to everyone at the University as work-related stress has the potential to affect any member of staff. It will be monitored and reviewed in consultation by the Human Resource and Student Support Directorate to ensure its effectiveness is maintained.

Risk assessments will be made available on the Stress webpage; training will be provided to assist managers to understand the importance and completion of the risk assessments.

### **2. Definition of Stress**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them."

Whilst pressure can be positive in some instances if managed correctly it is recognised that stress can be detrimental to health and general wellbeing.

Prolonged periods of stress can have a long term adverse effect on health. These can be:

- Physical: e.g. high blood pressure, heart disease, back pain, headaches, and multiple minor illnesses.
- Psychological: e.g. anxiety, depression.
- Emotional and Behavioural: e.g. mood swings, overeating or under-eating, social withdrawal.

### 3. **Management Risk Standards**

The University has a general legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees are not affected by work related stress. To assist with this duty the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have identified 6 broad categories of risk factors for work-related stress which the University has adopted to underpin this policy. These are:

- **Demands**  
This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
- **Control**  
This includes how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- **Support**  
This includes the encouragement and resources provided by the University, Line Management and colleagues
- **Relationships**  
This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying and harassment.
- **Role**  
This includes whether people clearly understand their role within the University and how the role interacts with the rest of the University
- **Change**  
This includes how any change is managed and communicated within the University

The University will proactively use these standards to assist in the identification of foreseeable stress and take further action to reduce, or where possible, prevent the causes of stress within its control. Any action introduced will be monitored and reviewed regularly. Stress risk assessments will take into account these 6 standards.

### 4. **Training**

Training is essential to enable the full implementation of the policy.

The University will provide suitable training and guidance for managers and colleagues and people with work related responsibilities for others. The training will enable managers to recognise symptoms of stress and be prepared to undertake risk assessment commensurate with their supervisory responsibilities. The training will provide information on the effects of stress and coping strategies and actions that may be taken.

The training will explore ways of reducing stress in the workplace and expand on the 6 broad categories of risk as outlined in section 3; information will be available which explains what support mechanisms are in place.

## **5. Responsibilities**

Keele University and its employees have a duty with a range of employment and health and safety requirements laid down in general legislation which applies equally to the management of stress as well as more general employment and health and safety matters.

The responsibilities for managing stress at Keele University are detailed below.

### **Organisational**

- The University is responsible for the implementation of this policy through the Director of Human Resources and Student Support and the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. Arrangements for Occupational Health and / or Counselling will be available and provided.
- The University will adhere to and enable the principles of Keele's Dignity and respect Framework in order to promote positive working relations.
- The University will ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments of the implications of organisational changes are carried out, and that effective controls are devised and implemented to minimise the adverse effects on members of staff, as committed to in its Management of Staff Affected by Change Policy and Procedure.
- Ensure that resources are made available to Schools / Directorate and Faculties to address workplace stress using the management risk standards in section 3
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.
- Consult with staff when changing institutional processes and practices

### **Managers**

- Managers are required to foster a supportive environment by adopting and communicating effective good practice as linked in with this policy and respond to concerns as they arise.
- Adhere to and enable the principles of Keele's Dignity and Respect Framework in order to promote positive working relations.
- Managers should lead by example, taking action with regard to their own stress levels and demonstrating a commitment to work-life balance by not working excessive hours or expecting their staff to do so.
- Refer colleagues to OH immediately when stress has been identified on a fit note.
- Conduct return to work interviews with colleagues to ensure they are supported and where possible, reduce/remove stressors.
- Signpost colleagues to OH and the counselling service as required.

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their department
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded; ensure deadlines are realistic and take into account workload.
- Ensure managers are able to use the 6 management standards in their place of work
- Ensure bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their school or service
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work

### **HRSS Staff**

HRSS Staff will:

- Provide, stress awareness training, implementation of stress risk assessments and specialist advice, including disability issues.
- Support managers and others in planning return to work of employees who have suffered from stress-related health problems
- Support individuals who have been absent from work with workrelated stress
- Signpost or refer individuals to the counselling service or other appropriate specialist organisations
- Provide continuing support
- Monitor and review sickness absence to address stress issues within the department / school
- Respond to concerns with timely advice
- Provide advice with regards to disability issues in relation to this policy

### **Staff**

Staff are expected to:

- Where possible identify early signs of stress in themselves and colleagues and raise issues of concerns with an appropriate member of staff, Line Manager or Trade Union Representative
- Accept appropriate advice if referred to Occupational Health or Human Resources
- Recognise their own training needs and attend courses as requested.
- Ensure unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated e.g. bullying and harassment, and reported as appropriate as per policy.

### **Safety representatives**

Safety representatives will be consulted as per Terms of Reference and in accordance with Regulations – see [consultation with employees](#)

<b>Document Name</b>	Stress Management Policy 2013
<b>Owner</b>	Human Resources
<b>Version Number</b>	[version number, with 0.1 increments for minor amendments]
<b>Equality Analysis Form Submission Date</b>	[Decision from Equality Analysis and form submission date]
<b>Approval Date</b>	7 November 2017
<b>Approved By</b>	[Committee name]
<b>Date of Commencement</b>	7 November 2017
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	7 November 2017
<b>Date for Next Review</b>	3 November 2016
<b>Related University Policy Documents</b>	[List all applicable]
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	