

**Health and Safety
Performance Standard HSPS 005**

Psychological Well-being

Safety, Health and Environment Unit

Title Psychological Well-Being

Reference Number HSPS 005

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The University of Kent, as an employer, places a high value on maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all its employees. The University recognises that this duty of care extends to mental health as well as physical health at work. Mental health problems have many causes, including stresses in the workplace and in the life of employees away from work. Whilst the University has no control over external factors it is committed to identifying sources of stress in the workplace and taking action to eliminate or reduce them.

This Health and Safety Performance Standard sits under the Wellbeing Protocol and sets out the University's aims and objectives for the management of health and safety in relation to potentially harmful stress at work. This is important because such stress could negatively impact on the physical and mental well-being of staff at the University. It should be read in conjunction with other University policies and strategies. Any strategy to eliminate sources of stress in the workplace has to be a joint activity involving the Senior Executive of the University, its appointed managers, professional specialists in the areas of safety, occupational health, human resource and learning and development and all individual members of staff. Input from organisations representing the working interests of the University's employees is also invaluable.

1.2 Definition

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

This makes an important distinction between the beneficial effect at work of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating, and involves ‘stretch activity’), and work-related stress. This latter can be seen to provoke a human but distressing reaction to demands or pressures that an individual can perceive as overwhelming and which they cannot cope with at a given time.

Work-related stress exists where an individual perceives they cannot cope with what is being asked of them at work. Anyone can experience this; no one is 'immune'. Each individual operates within their personal belief system, standards and capabilities in relation to perception of pressure and coping with demands.

It is important to realize that the HSE does not seek to get involved with individual cases where there is the development of stress or anxiety perceived to be related to work causes. This is the case whether it is perceived to be related to organizational issues or individual interactions, such as bullying or harassment. The HSE Management Standards and the risk assessment approach advocated by the HSE is primarily aimed at assessment for signs of organizational stress/pressure issues or hot spots. HSE advice advocates training and support for managers and individuals but this is secondary and tertiary support.

It is important to remember that work-related stress is not an illness, but, if it is prolonged or particularly intense, it can lead to problems with an individual's physical or psychological health. (See appendix 4).

Work-related stress can also lead to other behaviours which are not helpful to health and can act to contribute even further to increased stress levels, for example, skipping meals, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using recreational drugs.

An organization that has problems with stress across its activities will manifest signs of this and these could include:

- An increase in sickness absence; this can give rise to a domino effect where one person goes off sick, which leads to their workload being shared among the remaining staff which spreads the stress even further
- Reduced staff morale;
- Reduced staff performance
- High staff turnover
- Poor staff survey results

1.3 Objectives

To identify, as far as reasonably practicable, the arrangements in place to ensure that mental and psychological well-being of University employees will not be harmed by workplace hazards.

To comply with legislation under the **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) Section 2** that requires employers to ensure that their workplace is safe and healthy, so far as reasonably practicable, and in particular the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)** which require employers to undertake risk assessments for hazards in the workplace and put in place control mechanisms.

2. Management Responsibilities

2.1 University Level

The Safety Health and Environment Executive Committee (SHEEC) has executive responsibility for the oversight of the management of health and safety risks at the University; this includes risks to staff mental and physical health. SHEEC consults with the Occupational Health Advisor Group (OHAG) on these matters. The OHAG is composed of representatives from Safety, Occupational Health and HR. These groups, on behalf of the University Council, will oversee this Performance Standard.

In respect of staff psychological wellbeing the following measures are already in place and noted:

- The University has published the Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy Statement that is intended to achieve the objectives above. This strategy will be subject to regular review to monitor progress and to consider the efficacy of action taken.
- The focus of the strategy will be based on the evidence of metrics relating to potential stress within the organization:
 - Staff Survey Results
 - Sickness Absence Data

- Staff Turnover Results
- Number of referrals to Occupational Health (OH) related to work-related or work-associated stress
- In addition to the Staff Survey, consideration will be given to undertaking an Organisational Stress and Mental Wellbeing Risk Assessment
- Any strategy developed by risk assessment or analysis of these metrics shall be formulated through discussion at SHEEC and communicated through local safety committees
- The University will provide information/training programmes to ensure knowledge and understanding of mental health issues and to promote core competencies enabling management to adequately manage the causes of stress.
- Support for managers in respect of organisational change at any level can be accessed from HR/LOD
- The University will provide an [Occupational Health](#) service with confidential management and self-referral arrangements for members of staff. The Occupational Health service will have access to a budget to provide external counselling support in a timely fashion and for extended psychotherapy needs
- The University will provide an internal, independently accessible confidential Counselling Service for members of staff; [employees can access this through Student Support and Wellbeing](#)
- Information and advice is available via the [Staff Health & Wellbeing website](#)
- [Staff Health & Wellbeing Reading List](#): The library holds a stocks of book and publications on Wellbeing, Managing Stress, Mindfulness and other related topics
- [Kent Sport](#) Exercise facility is available on Campus and staff can access everything available with subsidised membership
- Staff University of Kent Wellbeing Hub: this is a facility that will give staff the opportunity to access health advice on exercise, diet, hydration, alcohol intake etc. It is a tool that can help individuals to optimise the proactive management of their health needs
- There are various staff focussed societies that operate at the University from a drama group, ballroom dancing to mindfulness and a crochet group

2.2 Departmental Level

University Policy (see [Safety, Health and Environment Unit website](#)) requires that all Heads of Department ensure that an assessment is undertaken of the risk factors which contribute to work place hazards, as required under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999).

This includes organisational factors that may pose a risk to psychological well-being, (see Appendix 1 for guidance and organisational factors). The assessment must include those risks that pose a threat to psychological health as well as physical health and safety. In addition Heads of Department will:

- Support line managers to access relevant training in the identification and causes of stress and how to minimise or control it.
- Make arrangements to ensure support to staff who are undergoing difficulties, and that line managers are aware of the referral procedure to Occupational Health or directly to the Counselling Service for this purpose
- Provide arrangements for consultation and communication on changes affecting staff.
- Establish good communications through the provision of regular departmental briefings, team meetings, appraisal and performance reviews etc. within their department and foster a supportive environment in which stress can be discussed.
- Monitor and support line managers in the implementation and operation of this performance standard

2.3 Wellbeing within the [RPD Framework](#)

All line managers have a requirement to conduct a RPD with the members of their team on an annual basis. This meeting represents an opportunity to discuss an employee's general and psychological wellbeing. If an individual highlights that their work is contributing to higher levels of stress for them then the University's Individual Stress Risk Assessment form can be used to help facilitate a discussion. If the issues presented are beyond the scope of the manager to facilitate alone, he/she should consider a discussion with HR and/or OH; this could lead to a Management Referral to OH.

2.4 Line Managers

Ensure that risk assessments relating to stress as required under University policy and Health & Safety Legislation are in place.

The principles of risk assessment for work-related stress do not differ from other forms of risk assessment. There is, however, a need to take account of the individual's perceptions of stress as well as to assess objectively any work conditions that are likely to cause stress. Assessments should be undertaken by the line managers in conjunction with the individual.

Assessments of the hazards associated with workplace stress should aim to identify:

- Factors at work that are likely to cause stress (Appendix 5)
- Whether those factors are currently causing stress
- Those employees who are at risk of experiencing workplace stress
- Existing preventative or precautionary measures
- The action that is required to eliminate or reduce risk (Appendix 5)

3. Employees' Responsibilities

Individuals have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and that of others that might be affected by their actions, as required under the University's Health & Safety Policy (see Safety, Health and Environment Unit website) and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Section 7.

The University cannot respond to alleviate a stress situation unless it is made aware that such a situation exists.

In the first instance this should be reported to your Line Manager without undue delay. This can be done at the point of RPD discussion, informally, or by using the Stress Risk Assessment Tools available via the SHE/OH/HR websites. If an individual feels they cannot approach their line manager because that person is part of the cause of the perceived stress/pressure, then they should discuss with one of the following:

- A more senior manager in the same line/department
- [HR Employee Relations Contact](#)
- A suitably qualified member of the [Occupational Health Team](#). The matter will be dealt with in confidence unless the individual gives express permission for a report to be sent to Human Resources and/or the head of department/departamental manager. However, employees must be aware that it is a duty of the Occupational Health professionals to ensure that an individual is not placed at risk to their mental health because of situations or circumstances at work and if it is perceived that the problem is significant the OH professional will seek to work with the individual to address the issues
- [The University Counselling Service](#)
- An Harassment Contact working within the [University's Harassment Contact Network](#)
- The University's Mediation Service

It should be remembered that contact with the University's Counselling Service and Harassment Contact Network will provide support but neither agency can offer assistance which will lead to further action.

All staff are expected to attend training as required and to comply with the University's procedures in place, in relation to bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Individuals are also encouraged to support colleagues showing early signs of stress.

4. Monitoring

The University will monitor compliance with Performance Standard through audits undertaken by the SHE Unit and results of staff surveys.

- The Safety, Health and Environment Unit will work in conjunction with the Human Resources Department to monitor trends in data relating to stress and other mental health issues.

- In light of the results obtained from the above monitoring processes the University Performance Standard on Psychological Well-Being will be reviewed and altered as required.
- All department heads should monitor sickness absence and other indicators to enable early identification of stress issues.
- Departments are responsible for reviewing risk assessments when there is a significant change in circumstances.

5. Training

- The University will ensure that training courses are available to assist staff in managing personal stress
- Training in mental health awareness will be scheduled within staff development training
- Information and guidance is provided by the University on mental health wellbeing via various internal websites

6. Further information

www.hse.gov.uk/stress

[Mental Health at Work: OH website](#)

[Staff Health & Wellbeing Website](#)

Other University policies that may apply [available from the Human Resources Department]:

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/>

Other legislation that may apply.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 University of Kent Generic Department Stress Risk Assessment Tool with Managers' Guidance

Appendix 2 University of Kent Generic Individual Stress Risk Assessment Tool

Appendix 3 Effects of Stress on the Individual and the Organisation

Appendix 4 Organisational Risk Factors that can contribute to stress and possible solutions

Appendix 5 Psychological Wellbeing Management : A Manager's Guide

Appendix 1

Risk Assessment Guidance for Managers: Generic Departmental Risk Assessment Tool

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Guidance provides information for Heads of Department and managers to help assess and control risks which may cause Occupational Stress. It is based upon guidance produced by the Health & Safety Executive, the University and Colleges Employers' Association and the recognised Trade Unions.

When it is clear what the cause of the occupational stress is, there may well be certain adjustments in some instances that can be put in place to assist with the levels of stress or remove such stressors.

This document should be read in conjunction with the University's Strategy for Managing Psychological Well-being and other Human Resources and Occupational Health policies and guidance.

- 1.2 Guidance and support on the general suggestions that can be implemented following a risk assessments and upon specific cases should be obtained from Human Resources. Occupational Health will generally advise HR following a Stress Risk Assessment and give their professional views on how best to support a team, department or individual and following that the relevant HR Adviser/Business Partner will advise on how to best implement initiatives where possible. Specialist support is available from:

- Occupational Health Team
- Human Resources
- Health, Safety and Environment Unit

The request for support should normally be channelled via a Line Manager and often following discussion with HR. with the exception of confidential requests for staff counselling.

2. Risk Assessment

- 2.1 Regulation 3 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk to Health & Safety to be carried out, this is reaffirmed in the University's Health and Safety Policy. It is the responsibility of the Heads of Department to satisfy themselves that risk assessments:

- take account of all foreseeable hazards
- are completed to a consistent and reasonable standard
- relate to the actual work undertaken
- are reviewed regularly
- are adequately recorded

- 2.2 Clearly a risk assessment which identifies all hazards which may impact on health and safety must consider those factors which may cause stress.

2.3 Risk assessment must be a planned activity and may be required at two levels:

- **Generic** – responsible managers should carry out an overall review of the factors liable to lead to stress problems.
- **Specific risk assessments** – If this overall review identifies individual tasks and workloads liable to result in particularly high levels of stress, these should be assessed further and where necessary a consultation with the specialist support services initiated.

Additional assessment and intervention may be necessary where an individual within a department is or becomes particularly vulnerable to stress. (Appendix 2). However, it is important to note that work-related stress may affect any member of staff as it is often a result of the combined effects of a number of different factors, such as work load, degree of control individuals can exercise in relationships and external factors.

3. Identifying Hazards and Level of Risk

The HSE has identified the following 6 key hazards for Work related stress.

- **Demands**
- **Control**
- **Support**
- **Relationships**
- **Role**
- **Change**

Examples of hazards for each category can be found in the Left hand box of the form; the list is not exhaustive and there may be another hazard identified which is not in the list. The manager(s) undertaking the assessment need to decide which hazards may be applicable for their work are/group/department/school. Following identification of the hazard an assessment of the level of risk arising from the hazard needs to be estimated. Is it a persistent or frequent issue? Does the hazard only manifest rarely. The usual terminology used for categorising the level of risk is High/Medium/Low

Sources of information on existing hazards and the extent/level of problem they present may include:-

- a. Sickness absence – higher or lower than similar departments? Do staff come in when they are unwell? Have you had one or more cases of stress related illness in the department?
- b. Staff turnover
- c. Productivity – higher or lower than similar departments? Higher or lower than it used to be in your department?
- d. Staff opinions – this is a vital resource and a major guide in a group risk assessment for any existing hazards and level of risk. The perception of team members is invaluable. To gather this information, consider talking to members of your team individually or in a small group. If you have a larger department you might want to

use the questionnaire in Appendix 2 to gather information anonymously from a wider group as a starting point for discussion.

4. Evaluation and Control of Risk

For each of the hazards identified, the following 3 questions should be considered:

What action is being taken already?

Is this enough?

What more needs to be done?

Try and identify areas where you can realistically change things within the department. Further ideas may be found in Appendix 5. Where appropriate, it may be more logical to refer difficulties upwards as this could encourage solutions to be identified at an organisational level.

If there are many issues, do not try and resolve them all at once. Identify the 3 or 4 biggest problems and focus your efforts on these. As these factors improve, you can move on to look at other issues.

5. Documentation and Review

You should document your assessment and share it with your staff.

You should review it on a regular basis (perhaps annually) and also if there are changes within the University or the department which may increase stress levels.

Generic Departmental Stress Risk Assessment Tool

Department.....Date.....

This table lists some examples of action planning to reduce the risk of work-related stress problems
 To be read in conjunction with ‘HSE Stress Standards’, the Universities Psychological Well-being Performance Standard and Occupational Stress Risk Assessment Guidance

Stress risk assessment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the hazards • Decide who might be harmed and how • Assess the risk and decide if it is currently causing stress • Record the findings and decide on any action required to eliminate or reduce stress • Review the assessment over time 		
A. DEMANDS	Possible solutions	Action taken/planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work overload • Long hours • Proper rest and holidays • Inadequate staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise tasks • Look at job design and working practices • Check leave is being properly taken • Is work being taken home? Is the constant communication during off-duty time by e-mail, text and phone? • Cut out unnecessary work and communications • Review workloads and staffing, and enable individuals to plan their work 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate qualified for the job • Too little training for the job • Over promotion • Skills not recognised – promotion prospects not fulfilled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure individuals are matched to jobs – people can be over and under qualified • Analyse skills alongside the tasks • Provide training for those who need more, e.g. when introducing new technology • Review and consider selection, skill criteria, job summaries, training and 	

	<p>supervision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career planning discussion, training needs evaluation • Monitor workplace policies in practice: discrimination 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring or repetitive work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job enrichment/job rotation/role review • Assess workstation and work practice for possible solutions • Consider changing the way jobs are done by moving people between jobs, giving individuals more responsibility, increasing the scope of the job, increasing the variety of tasks, or giving a group of workers greater responsibility for effective performance of the group 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate resources for task 	<p>Analyse requirements for any project/task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equipment • staffing • priorities • deadlines 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees experiencing excessive workloads • Employees working under excessive pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review workload and demands regularly and as an integral part of the appraisal and performance management process • Support staff in planning their work. Try to establish what aspects of their job they find challenging. Redistribute work or set different work priorities if they are not coping • Check that holiday leave is being taken and staff needs are being accommodated • Check management skills and assess training needs 	
<p>The physical working environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor temperature control • noise • lack of facilities for rest/breaks • poor lighting • poor ventilation • badly placed or designed workstations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure workplace hazards are properly controlled • Undertake risk assessments of workspace and significant tasks 	
<p>The psychological working environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threat of aggression or violence • verbal abuse • poor management practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess risks, implement controls including investigation of complaints and appropriate training • Monitor absence levels and trends. Compare with other departments, other businesses 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at the individual and any risk factors that apply to this particular person 	
B. CONTROL		
	Possible solutions	Action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not being able to balance the demands of work and life outside work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage a healthy work-life balance Ensure staff take all their allocated holiday allowance and distribute it fairly across the year Develop a communications protocol that ensures people have rest time completely free of all work-related messages. Over-anxious people often need to be in constant contact. Over-controlling management tends not to respect off-duty time 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigid work patterns Fixed deadlines occurring in different parts of the year Lack of control over work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to provide some scope for varying working conditions and flexible work schedules (e.g. flexible working hours, working from home) Consult with people to allow them to influence the way their jobs are done, what the real deadlines are and what the priorities are 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicting work demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set realistic deadlines for tasks Take into account that individuals are different, and try to allocate work so that everyone is working in the way that helps them work best, takes account of their home obligations and makes best use of their skills Be clear about tasks required 	

C. SUPPORT		
	Possible solutions	Action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to work system Sickness and absence management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and systems in place, monitored and consistently applied Measure trends and changes Investigate variations Check management skills and assess training needs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inductions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff properly inducted, existing staff transferring or promoted or returning to work after long absence also to be inducted Special attention for young people as required Mentoring roles OH/HR support DDA adjustments in place, reviewed and checked 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post disciplinary, grievance or suspension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support staff as appropriate and in line with ACAS good practice 	

D. RELATIONSHIPS	Possible solutions	Action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor relationships with others Staff complaints or rising absence trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate causal factors Provide training in interpersonal skills, non-discriminatory rules and workplace conduct standards Discuss the problem openly with individuals Follow complaint procedures Check management skills and assess training needs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying or confrontational communications styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage constructive and positive communications between staff Managers should discuss and address bullying and/or confrontational communication styles with member of staff who display these behaviours Consider training and policy guidance 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying, racial or sexual harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up effective systems to prevent bullying and harassment. Ensure staff are aware of the Universities' Dignity at Work & Study Policy, which covers equal opportunities, stress problems, harassment, etc., and that they know how to get support or make a complaint Practise by example and make it clear what behaviours are not acceptable Provide details of any empirical evidence: absence trends, complaints, etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of support or fear culture within from management and co-workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encourage staff, protect them from reprisals Consider introducing a mentoring and counselling scheme Investigate and take action as appropriate as soon as possible 	

E. ROLE	Possible solutions	Action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear lines of accountability and responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure good communication systems exist and are in place from top to bottom Set management standards to ensure best practice in: clarity of job function, responsibility for staff management and welfare Make it clear to staff that management will try to ensure that their problems will be handled sensitively and at the appropriate level of management 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of communication and consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate clear business objectives Aim for good communication and close employee involvement, 	

	particularly during periods of change or high pressure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A culture of blame when things go wrong, denial of potential problems • Failure to recognise success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be honest, set a good example, and listen to and respect others • Acknowledge and reward successes 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A culture that considers stress a sign of weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approachable management which wants to know about problems and will try to help to resolve them 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expectation that people will regularly work excessively long hours or take work home with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid working excessively long hours • Lead by example • Check management skills and assess training needs • Schedule work in a way that allows recovery time after unavoidable busy periods 	
F. CHANGE	Possible solutions	Action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears about job security • Poor communication – uncertainty about what is happening • Not enough time allowed to implement change • Inexperience/fear of new technology • Lack of skills for new tasks • Not enough resource allocated for change process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide effective support for staff throughout the process • Consult with staff likely to be involved in a change of management programme – fear and uncertainty can lead to increased anxiety, unfounded gossip, poor employment relationships and increased absence • Getting together as a team can help people to feel less isolated with their concerns • Ensure effective two-way communication throughout process – knowing exactly what is going to happen when can help people feel less anxious about a change • Consider training needs – do people have the tools and skills to effect change? • Consider changes in teams or work environment – a small change, e.g. a different positioning of desks, can have a major impact on communication and work relationships to help people not to feel isolated 	

Assessment undertaken by **Print name**.....

Review date.....

Appendix 2

Risk Assessment Guidance for Managers: Individual Stress Risk Assessment Tool

Introduction

The University believes that the most effective way of managing stress and related mental well-being issues at work is to identify and tackle root causes through a process of individual risk assessment. This risk assessment can be used as a self-assessment tool helping you, the individual to identify potential problems. Once identified, it can be used as the basis for discussion with your line manager by providing a framework around which to build the conversation.

The Process

The process for carrying out a risk assessment is:

1. Identify the Hazards

These have been identified for us by the Health & Safety Executive and are:

- Demand
- Support
- Control
- Role
- Relationships
- Change

2. Determine the Risk

Once you have identified potential hazards in your role, you next have to decide whether they have a negative impact upon you. Not all identified hazards will be problematic as their impact may differ from person to person. There are factors which should be taken into account when considering the impact on you as an individual – personal coping skills, family network and support, physical health, finances, relationships to name but a few. As these change for better or worse, the impact of the identified hazards can also change.

3. Identify and Introduce control measures.

Once you have identified relevant risks, use this risk assessment to discuss them with your line manager and devise appropriate control measures.

4. Review Effectiveness of Control Measures

After a suitable period of time, the countermeasures that have been put in place or agreed with your line manager to improve or control these risks should be reviewed as assess effectiveness.

Personal Input

When completing this risk assessment take into consideration any personal life factors, which, by their very nature reduce a person's resistance to stress, and therefore may exacerbate the effects of a negative hazard. This personal vulnerability may change from time to time as life events occur i.e. marriage, divorce, birth and death.

Examples or personal life factors which may exacerbate the negative impact of a hazard:

- Lack of assertiveness skills, being unable to say no.
- Effects of harassment i.e. sexual, bullying
- Outside work influences, difficulties with home life, problems with own health.
- Existence of interpersonal conflicts with either team members or team leader/manager.
- Skills being under utilised, not being able to work to full potential.
- Any other identified personal issue

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Some of these issues may not be resolvable by any specific countermeasure, but there are support mechanisms that may reduce the impact e.g., counselling, support following sick leave, alternative hours or duties, training and development. Once again if you have any problems identifying any of the help available contact the Occupational Health Advisor or Personnel Department.

Individual Generic Stress Risk Assessment.

As part of a stress risk assessment, it may help you to complete the following questionnaire. Results can then be used as a starting point for discussion of areas of concern within the department.

Self-Administered Risk Assessment	
Assessment date -	Review date -

Name	Role
-------------	-------------

DEMANDS Includes issues like your work load, working patterns, competency and physical environment	Applicable? Y/N	Where a positive answer is selected this indicates a negative impact on the individual? Please supply additional detail
Do you have to work very fast?		
Do you have to work very intensively?		
Are you pressured for time to complete your work?		
Do different groups at work demand things from you that you think are hard to combine?		
Are there problems with physical environment you work in?		
CONTROL How much you have in the way you do your work		
Is there little or no variety in the tasks you are asked to do at work?		
Is your job boring?		
Do you have to do the same thing over and over again?		
Do you have little or no scope to		

learn new things through your work?		
Do you feel unable to discuss with your manager the structure of your work and how it is done?		
Do you feel discouraged from showing initiative at work and using your full range of skills?		
Do you feel that you have little or no say in the organisation of your work environment?		
SUPPORT The level of support provided by line management & peers		
Do you feel you lack the necessary knowledge about how to access managerial support?		
Do you feel discouraged from seeking support at work at the point where you start to struggle?		
Do you believe that you are not given adequate support when undertaking new tasks?		
Do you believe that the University lacks support mechanisms to help you cope with work-life balance issues?		
RELATIONSHIPS Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour		
Are you unaware of the University procedures in place to resolve conflict?		
Do you feel unable to report your concerns about issues at work?		
Do you feel that unacceptable behaviour in the work place is not dealt with or addressed effectively?		
Do you feel that management have a lack of understanding about working relationships in teams?		
Do you believe that management practices and/or University culture hinder work relationships being based on openness, honesty, and respect?		
Do you believe you lack the knowledge of University policies in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour?		
ROLE Whether you understand your role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that you do not have conflicting roles		
Do you have conflicting demands		

placed upon you?		
Do you believe that your job description has little connection to what you actually do every day?		
Are you confused about the structure and aim of your role and how it helps the University function?		
Do you feel disconnected from the aim and function of the University?		
CHANGE How organisational change (large & small) is managed and communicated to you.		
Do you believe that you are not fully informed about planned organisational change and not informed as early as you could be?		
Do you think you are given insufficient information to enable you to understand the reasons for planned organisational change?		
Do you think that the University has poor communication channels in respect of planned organisational changes?		
Do you feel disempowered and unable to voice your concerns about any planned organisational changes or change processes the University starts?		

Any additional comments you wish to make.....

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.....

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.....

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Date.....

Print name
(optional).....

Please hand this to your manager and make an appointment with him/her to discuss in detail.

You may wish to keep a copy of this assessment for your own records.

Appendix 3

Nature of Personal Stressors and Signs and Symptoms of Stress on an Individual or an Organisation

Stress is often a multifaceted phenomenon and rarely the result of one individual factor. Signs and symptoms of stress can also be a sign or symptom of a number of medical conditions so please consult your GP if you experience any of these symptoms and they last longer than a few days.

Stressors in your personal life could be the major source of your stress symptoms and these could include:

Relationship difficulties: marriage/partner/divorce
Financial problems
Long term personal ill health in or health problems affecting a close family member
House move
Death of a close friend or relative
Arrival of a new baby/adoption/fertility problems.
(The above list contains examples and is not exhaustive)

Physical Symptoms of Stress:

Headaches,
Raised blood pressure, Aggravation of heart conditions, Palpitations
Irritable bowel syndrome/gastro-intestinal disorders
Weight loss/gain
Skin conditions, Ulcers
Muscular tension (upper and lower back, neck and shoulders)
Fatigue, Insomnia/sleep disturbances
Low immune system. (Frequent minor infections)

Mental/Psychological Symptoms of Stress:

Anxiety/Depression
Anger, Frustration
Low self esteem
Mood swings, Irritability
Memory loss, Lack of concentration, Accident-prone
Lack of motivation and creativity

Organisational Symptoms of a Stressful Work Environment/Culture

Reduced staff morale
Sickness absence rates
Staff turnover
High accident rate
High Level of customer complaints
High error rate, poor quality control

Appendix 4

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have identified the following Organisational Risk Factors and their possible solutions

Demands

Relates to issues involving workload, work patterns, and the work environment

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / state to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees;
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Control

Relates to how much influence individuals have in the way they do their work

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / state to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

Support

Relates to the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / state to be achieved:

- The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Relationships

Relates to the promotion of a positive working environment where conflict can be avoided and managed constructively and where unacceptable behaviour is addressed and managed

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / state to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

Role

Relates to whether individuals understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that roles are designed to avoid individuals facing competing or conflicting demands

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / state to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

Change

Relates to how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated to all staff

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing any organisational change; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / state to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes;
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

Reference: [HSE Management Standards webpage](#)

Appendix 5

Psychological Well-Being Management

A Manager's Guide

Introduction

As organisations change and become more flexible to adapt to the environment, some employees can experience symptoms of stress. It is recognised that working in higher education places unique demands and pressures on staff. This guide seeks to provide you with information about

- The symptoms of negative stress: to enable you to identify those employees who experience the adverse effects of stress.
- Your responsibility for the prevention and reduction of negative stress in the workplace, to enable you to discharge your managerial responsibilities effectively.
- The support mechanisms available within the University for those staff who experience the negative effects of stress.

Why have a Psychological Well Being Performance Standard and Interventions?

Under health and safety regulations, you have a duty of care for the health, safety and welfare of the staff you manage. This applies not only to the physical environment but the mental well being of staff as well.

In addition to this legal context, it is recognised that long term excessive stress has a negative impact on individuals in a number of ways. Firstly, a build up of tension can result in a deterioration of health and increased absenteeism from work. Secondly, stress can affect the individual's thought processes, which impact upon work performance and relationships between colleagues in the workplace.

Thus, the management of stress is a key issue which can impact upon the organisation's ability to deliver its services and the activities which support this.

What is stress?

Stress is a natural response to a challenge or change. Some forms of stress can be enjoyable and motivating e.g. competing in a sport. Normally the effects of stress are short-lived and cause no lasting harm. However, negative stress results when individuals perceive that the pressures upon them are extreme and the demands placed upon them are beyond their perceived ability to cope. The threshold at which negative stress develops varies between individuals and manifests differently in different people; it is unpredictable and not uniform.

What are the Symptoms of Stress?

Emotional

Anxiety
Frustration
Depression
Irritability
Fearfulness
Anger
Helplessness
Low Self esteem

Physical

Tiredness
Fatigue
Sleep disturbances
Muscle tension
Headaches
High blood pressure

Behavioural

Poor concentration
Poor time management
Erratic eating habits
Frequent sickness absence
Reduced performance
Increased intake of alcohol, cigarettes, etc.
Accident-prone

These can also be symptoms of a number of medical conditions so the individual should be encouraged to report them to their General Practitioner if they occur over long periods.

What do I do if someone in my Team is showing signs of Stress?

- Try to discuss your concerns with the person, i.e. identify the behaviours you have noticed and discuss whether there is an underlying cause. Try to refer to specific examples or instances of behaviour, if possible.
- Ensure they are put at ease and not made to feel guilty.
- Listen actively - pay attention to what the person is saying (and omitting to say), try to show empathy with the individual and communicate this to them.
- If stress is agreed to be a contributing factor, try to reach an understanding with the person as to what action needs to be taken either by you as the manager and/or the employee.
- Ensure the individual is aware of the sources of support available to him/her and how to access these; encourage him/her to use them.
- If an employee is absent from the workplace possibly due to stress-related absence, discuss the case with your Human Resources Manager and/or make a referral to the Occupational Health Adviser.
- Where employees are recovering from the negative effects of stress, monitor the situation closely to ensure that they are not exposed to similar circumstances again. Utilise the services of Occupational Health.

What can I do to reduce the risks of members of my team experiencing symptoms of negative stress?

- Try to be flexible with the elements of the workload that can be planned and agreed; be realistic about the level of work to be done and the employee's ability to do it.
- Provide or ensure access to training for employees to enable them to perform effectively.

- Wherever possible explain the reasons for managerial decisions you take. Be watchful for conflict between individuals including possible sexual/racial harassment and bullying and take appropriate action where such behaviours occur.
- Encourage those staff who regularly work excessive hours or do not take lunch breaks or holidays to modify their behaviours and to re-establish a balance between work and leisure activities.
- Praise your staff for doing well and where you have concerns about the performance of individuals discuss these with them privately, in a non-threatening manner.

What are the sources of support for those experiencing the negative effects of stress?

In some cases all that will be required is assurance and encouragement from you, line manager. However, where this does not resolve the problem, the manager should discuss the case with their HR Employee Relations Adviser who will be able to discuss the options available. Alternatively, or on the advice of the HR ERA, advice may be sought from Occupational Health. This can be done by arranging a meeting to discuss perceived issues and this might or might not, in the first instance, involve the individual who has raised the issues. Additionally, a formal and confidential [Management Referral to Occupational Health](#) might be an appropriate and positive way forward. The Occupational Health assessment may identify adjustments to work duties or structure as ways to assist the person who is struggling. It is important to be aware that responsibility for implementing or facilitating these adjustments lies primarily with the manager. This is because the manager is the expert on the nature, structure and demands of the work of the individual and how that fits in with the rest of the team. If stress/pressure problems have been discussed between an individual and their manager or HR, encouraging the person to self-refer to OH is not appropriate; a Management Referral must be completed once the organisation is aware of the problems involved.

Occupational Health

Once contact is made with Occupational Health, the Occupational Health professional will discuss the individual's concerns and any underlying health conditions which may be contributing to the negative effects of stress they are experiencing. In addition to Management Referrals any individual can [self-refer to Occupational Health](#) via [email](#) or by telephone: (01227 82) 4691. A report is always sent from OH to management and HR following a Management Referral; the content of the report is always discussed fully with the individual it pertains to so that they are happy with the content and level of disclosure. Reports are not routinely sent to management following self-referral to Occupational Health.

Staff Counselling Service

This is a confidential service on campus where individuals can be referred or can self-refer. Contact details are: telephone: (01227 82) 3206 or email www.counselling@kent.ac.uk

Conclusion

The University of Kent is committed to reducing the risks of employees developing signs of stress. Line managers have a vital role to play in this process in a number of ways:

- facilitating informal 'debriefing' when staff are involved in stressful situations in the workplace;
- maintaining relationships with their team members so that they pick up signs of negative stress quickly;
- providing support to their team and referring team members to appropriate University agencies for additional support where appropriate;
- encouraging an open and positive work environment which reduces the risks of stress developing.