

Health & Wellbeing Procedure (Stress Management)

1 PURPOSE

This Management of Health & Wellbeing procedure sets out the University's aims and objectives for the management of health and safety in relation to potential stress at work.

2 SCOPE

This procedure is applicable from 1st October 2008 and covers all University staff and campuses.

3 DEFINITIONS

Stress	<p>"The reaction people have to excessive demands or pressures, arising when people try to cope with tasks, responsibilities or other types of pressure connected with their job but find difficulty, strain or worry in doing so."</p> <p>HSE, 2005</p>
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4 POSITION STATEMENT

- 4.1 The University believes that staff are its most important asset and that their well-being is essential to the achievement of a high performance culture and the provision of quality services.
- 4.2 Whilst the Ulster University has no control over external factors, it is committed to identifying sources of stress in the workplace and will take action to address those causes of stress within its control.

- 4.3 Under the terms of the relevant legislation and regulations, the Ulster University has a duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the physical and mental health, safety and welfare at work of its entire staff. The Ulster University also has a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which its staff are exposed.
- 4.4 Stress reduces performance, creativity and productivity. The Ulster University is committed to developing procedures, training measures and support systems to help all staff understand and recognise the nature and causes of stress and to take positive steps to manage stress effectively.
- 4.5 The key aims and objectives of this procedure are therefore:
- To increase awareness of stress and the methods available to combat it
 - To initiate appropriate action to manage and reduce stress at work
 - To assist staff in managing stress in others and themselves
 - To manage problems which occur and to provide confidential support
 - To manage the return to work of those who have been absent as a result of stress.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES

Vice Chancellor

On behalf of the Council the Vice-Chancellor has executive responsibility to ensure, that the requirements of the health and safety legislation and the University health and safety policy are complied with.

The Vice-Chancellor will ensure that responsibility for health and safety is properly assigned and accepted at all levels within the university.

The Vice-Chancellor will ensure that adequate resources are made available for the effective implementation of the university health and safety policy.

DEANS, DIRECTORS AND DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Deans, Directors and Directors of Research Institutes are responsible at a strategic level for reducing the risk for their staff to reasonable levels of pressure at work. In support of meeting their responsibilities to staff will:

- Adopt and champion a culture and style that embraces good communication and close employee involvement, in particular, during times of change.

- Seek to secure appropriate resources needed to meet demands placed upon staff and that relevant training is available for the tasks expected of them.
- Encourage an open attitude towards expressions by employees regarding stress at work, and will treat work-related stress and health issues seriously.
- Respond when an employee is diagnosed as psychologically unfit by a Health Professional internally or externally to the organisation. They will identify any contributing factors that the job may make towards the employees ill health.
- They will negotiate modifications where possible in the job to assist the employee in their return to fitness.

HEADS OF FACULTY ADMINISTRATION, SCHOOLS, DEPARTMENTS AND MANAGERS

Heads of Faculty Administration, Schools, Departments and Managers are responsible for the provision of a healthy and safe working environment and will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the policy and have responsibility for:

- Conducting and implementing recommendations of risk assessments within areas and activities under their control. This should be undertaken in conjunction with their staff and with the assistance of Health and Safety Services if necessary. (Risk assessment is a management responsibility arising from the Management of Health and Safety at Work (NI) and applies as much to mental risk as to physical risks).
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and/or procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties and are trained and developed to handle job responsibilities and transitions to new roles.
- Encourage effective time management by monitoring working hours, overtime, workloads and travel schedules of team members and ensuring use of holiday entitlements.
- Attend management training as required including Health and Safety training.
- Ensure bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their functional area.
- Be vigilant and where practicable offer additional support to any member of staff who is experiencing stress outside of work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Regularly reviewing objectives and priorities giving support and direction through regular appraisal and supervision.
- Familiarise themselves with the Guidance for Managers.
- All staff who are absent from work with stress related issues must be referred to Occupational Health. In other cases it may be beneficial

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STAFF

Occupational Health and Safety staff will:

- Be a source of specialist advice and assistance to managers and staff by providing awareness and training.
- Respond to specific management and self referrals on a confidential basis in relation to wellbeing issues causing difficulties at work.
- Provide a confidential advisory and support service to individuals through counselling, information and training in personal coping strategies and stress management techniques and/or referral to specialist agencies as appropriate.
- Provide advice and support to staff who are on sick leave with stress related illness and advise individuals and managers in relation to rehabilitation and/or modifying duties.
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments.
- Advise the University of any changes or developments in the field of wellbeing at work.

HUMAN RESOURCE STAFF

Human Resource staff will:

- Give guidance on wellbeing management guidelines in conjunction with Occupational Health.
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment.
- Ensure appropriate match between individuals and their job by selection assessments techniques with referral to Occupational Health for medical clearance.

EMPLOYEES

Employees will:

- Be vigilant for signs of physical and mental ill health in themselves and their colleagues and seek support.
- Raise issues of concern with their line manager or in certain circumstances with Human Resource or Occupational Health at the earliest opportunity.
- Take responsibility for seeking training/advice and supervision necessary to work effectively and safely in the job.
- Avail of the support available.
- Accept opportunities for counselling if recommended by Occupational Health.

TRADE UNION HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

Trade Union Health and Safety Representatives will:

- Inform and advise their members on the interpretation of the Management of the Health and Wellbeing policy.
- Be advised of any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate ill health.
- Be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend trade Union training related to workplace ill health.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT STANDING COMMITTEE

Health and Safety Management Standing Committee will:

- Perform a pivotal role in ensuring that the policy is implemented
- Oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

6 PROCEDURE

- 6.1 All managers are required to undertake an assessment of the risks arising from work hazards. This process forms the basis of a pro-active and preventative approach to health risk management and must consider risks to psychological as well as to physical health.
- 6.2 Assessments of workplace stress should aim to identify:
- Factors at work with the potential to cause stress.
 - Whether these factors are currently causing stress.
 - Existing preventative or precautionary measures.
 - Actions required to eliminate or reduce the risk.
- 6.3 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 an individual's perceptions of stress as well as objectively assessing work conditions (e.g. excessive working hours), which could cause stress. Any assessment should therefore contain both subjective and objective elements and should be undertaken by the relevant line managers.

- 6.4 A Generic Risk Assessment form, RA7/1, should be completed for areas under your control. These assessments should be as generic as possible, consistent with ensuring that all categories of staff and work activities are covered for your area of control. This generic stress risk assessment should be reviewed at least annually, in line with the University's requirements for risk assessments.
- 6.5 Where it is brought to your attention or you have reason to believe that an individual member of staff may be suffering from stress then an Individual Stress Management Questionnaire, RA7/2 must be completed for that individual. This questionnaire contains more detailed information relating to the particular individual and must therefore be treated as a strictly confidential document.
- 6.6 Appropriate additional training will be provided for those managers and supervisors required to undertake stress risk assessments.

7 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order (1978)
Management of Health and Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland)
Working Time Regulations