

POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Statement

1.1 University management has a general responsibility for health and safety in the workplace, and in situations arising from the employment relationship. Employees have a reciprocal responsibility to care for themselves and others under the relevant statutory provisions.

1.2 Oxford Brookes University is committed to achieving a positive and supportive working environment which protects and promotes the health and wellbeing of its employees, and enhances the staff experience. It recognises that excessive or prolonged pressure can have a negative impact on individuals and the organisation; and that this can be mitigated through appropriate action on the part of both the University and its employees. The University seeks to work with staff to identify and reduce any stressors that arise from the employment relationship.

2. Definitions

2.1 Oxford Brookes has adopted the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) definition of work-related stress:

'The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work.'

2.2 This definition makes the distinction between pressure, which can be stimulating and motivating, if managed correctly; and stress, which can occur when pressure or other demands become excessive.

2.3 Mental and physical health can be affected by a number of factors which may or may not be work-related. This policy sets out the University's commitment to, and arrangements for, reducing the impact of work-related stress and providing support to employees affected by stress, whatever the cause.

2.4 Stress is a state, not an illness, and where stress lasts for only a short time there is usually no lasting effect. If stress is experienced over a longer period it can adversely affect physical and mental health (including anxiety and depression, heart disease, alcohol and drug dependency), as well as work performance, morale and relationships.

2.5 Health relates to a person's physical or mental condition. Wellbeing is the subjective state of being healthy, happy, and satisfied with one's quality of life.

3. HSE Management Standards

3.1 The HSE has identified six Management Standards that are characteristics of high levels of health, wellbeing and organisational performance. The Management Standards underpin this policy and provide a practical framework to minimise the impact of work-related stress.

Demands	Staff are able to cope with the demands of the job
Control	Staff are able to have a say about the way work is done
Support	Staff receive adequate information and support from colleagues and line managers
Relationships	Staff are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours e.g. bullying and harassment at work
Role	Staff understand their role and responsibilities
Change	Staff are involved and consulted about organisational changes

3.2 Further information about the Management Standards can be found in the guidance about this policy.

4. Aim

4.1 Oxford Brookes aims to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, staff work in a positive, safe and supportive working environment. We seek to promote a culture in which the University, its managers and employees are committed to working together to minimise the causes of work-related stress and to provide appropriate support when required.

4.2 To support this aim, the University will:

- Promote good management practice
- Provide a range of employment and health and safety policies, systems and monitoring to support managers and staff to minimise the risk of work-related stress
- Provide training for managers on the prevention of work-related stress
- Provide information and support to staff about stress-prevention and ensure the early intervention in cases of work-related stress
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as a workplace free from harassment and bullying
- Monitor appropriate workload allocation, taking account of aspects of employee wellbeing
- Promote effective and timely communication across the University
- Provide opportunities for staff development so that employees have the skills to carry out their roles and develop their own careers
- Ensure effective and timely consultation with staff representatives, recognising the positive role they can play in the prevention and management of work-related stress through their contribution to policy development and monitoring through the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 University

5.1.1 The University has a duty of care towards its staff and a legal obligation to provide a safe working environment. Specifically, the University has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to identify, assess and respond to occupational causes of stress.

5.1.2 The Vice Chancellor is responsible to the Board of Governors for the management of health, safety and welfare across the University. Under the aegis of the Vice Chancellor and Board of Governors, Executive Board will ensure that there is an effective policy framework in place, together with arrangements for implementation and monitoring.

5.1.3 The University has established a Health, Safety and Welfare Committee to consult safety representatives with a view to making and maintaining arrangements which will enable the University and its staff to cooperate effectively in promoting and developing measures to ensure the health and safety at work of employees and monitor the effectiveness of such measures.

5.2 Managers

5.2.1 Managers have a general responsibility for health and safety in the workplace and in situations arising from the employment relationship.

5.2.2 Managers should identify, minimise and address any stressors affecting their staff. They should consider the HSE Management Standards and:

- conduct stress risk assessments within their areas of responsibility where there are concerns about workplace stress and take appropriate action to mitigate identified stressors;
- ensure effective engagement and communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational or process changes, with appropriate opportunities to influence decision-making;
- ensure that staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their roles and receive opportunities for personal development;
- monitor workloads to ensure that staff are not overloaded;
- monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not over-working and that they take their full holiday entitlement;
- attend training in good management practice and health and safety;
- tackle incidents of bullying and harassment when they occur;
- refer to Human Resources or Occupational Health any employee who presents with stress-related ill health;
- offer appropriate support to employees who are experiencing stress outside work;
- ensure the PDR process supports the overall objectives of the Policy for the Prevention and Management of Stress in the Workplace
- hold regular 1:1 and team meetings.
- refer upwards where appropriate if employee concerns cannot be adequately resolved

5.3 HR Management Responsibilities

5.3.1 The HR Business Partnerships teams will support managers to identify and minimise the causes of stress by:

- providing guidance on the stress policy;
- monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress (including running regular staff surveys and addressing any issues identified in the annual occupational health report);
- providing regular management information on sickness absence rates and the causes of absence;
- providing support to managers and staff during periods of organisational change;
- facilitating access to relevant training for managers and staff;
- facilitating referral of staff to Occupational Health when appropriate;
- consulting and informing staff representatives of significant organisational change.

5.4 Occupational Health Advisors' Responsibilities

5.4.1 Occupational Health will:

- provide specialist advance and awareness training on the identification and management of stress, including the HSE Management Standards;

- train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments;
- refer employees to counsellors or other specialist agencies as appropriate;
- support employees who have been absent owing to stress-related illness and advise them and their managers on return to work and rehabilitation plans;
- monitor and review the effectiveness of measures designed to reduce stress, and make recommendations for further improvements as necessary;
- alert line managers and HR when the pattern of referrals to Occupational Health suggests that there may be a concern about stress in any particular part of the University, and initiate appropriate action, e.g. stress audit;
- provide an annual report to the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee on the incidence of stress-related absence and the effectiveness of actions taken to minimise this.

5.5 Employee responsibilities

5.5.1 Employees are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to promote and protect their own health and wellbeing, as well as the health and wellbeing of those affected by their behaviour. For example, employees will be expected to:

- raise concerns about potential or actual workplace stresses with their line manager, Human Resources or union representative;
- attend appropriate training and apply the principles of stress management;
- actively consider opportunities for counselling when recommended by Occupational Health or their GP.

5.5.3 The Health, Safety and Welfare Committee will monitor to the effectiveness of this policy. Union representatives will bring to its attention any concerns raised by their members. Both Health Safety and Welfare Committee members and union representatives will suggest areas where further improvements could be made.

6. Support for implementation

6.1 For Line Managers

- Management development training provided by the Oxford Centre for Learning and Development (OCSLD)
- Change management training (OCSLD) and support from Human Resources
- Coaching and mentoring training
- Training in the prevention and management of work-related stress provided by Occupational Health
- Access to competent Occupational Health and Health and Safety advice
- Support from Human Resources Managers and Business Partners

6.2 Support for Employees

- Training in change management and personal resilience (OCSLD)
- Human Resources policies, including flexible working, discretionary leave, etc.
- Harassment and bullying advisors
- Information and resources to support employees who wish to improve their general health and wellbeing, including Brookes Active, access to on-site sports facilities
- Personal Development Review
- Participate in regular 1:1 and team meetings with line managers
- Occupational Health support. Employees may self-refer or be referred by their line manager
- Brookes Staff Counselling Service. Referral is normally made via Occupational Health
- Trade union representatives

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1 Oxford Brookes will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy in the following ways:

7.1.1 An annual report on the reasons for absence from work, including absence related to stress or stress-related illnesses. These figures will be compared against other relevant external statistics or other appropriate indicators, e.g. UCEA data for the higher education sector. Anonymised data on referrals to OH and the University's counselling service, as well as feedback from exit interviews, will also be used.

7.1.2 The Oxford Brookes Staff Survey will include questions on work-life balance, workload and stress. The results will bench-marked against other similar organisations and used to inform continuing improvement plans.

7.1.3 Progress on the implementation of actions relating to the management of work-related stress will be included in the Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance presented to the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee, Executive Board and the Finance and Resources Committee of the Board of Governors.

8. Further information and resources

- Brookes' guidance for managers on preventing and managing work-related stress via new OH website (*website coming soon*)
- Change management support
- HSE Management Standards
- ACAS Guide on Consulting Workers on Health and Safety

Date of next review: February 2019