Appendix K: Stress Policy Statement and Code of Practice

Version: 2
Publication date: 28 September 2025
Document Owner: Vice Principal
Due for review: 28 September 2027

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1 Introduction

1.1 University Centre Quayside places a high value on promoting and maintaining a positive working environment for all employees and recognises that it has a legal duty to identify, assess and reduce the risks posed to the health and safety of its employees. UCQ is committed to identifying sources of occupational work-related stress and taking action to eliminate or reduce them, where this is possible.

2. Statement

2.1 UCQ recognises that that all staff are valued members of its community and only through their personal and professional development, in a healthy and safe working environment, can they be encouraged to contribute fully to the UCQ ethos and play an important role in achieving our objectives. UCQ recognises that in order to maintain a healthy and safe working environment and fulfil its duty of care for employees, it should have arrangements in place to eliminate or reduce stress in the workplace. This commitment is central to the ethos and mission of the UCQ, coupled with its legal obligations arising from UK legislation.

While UCQ has no control over external factors, it is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that members of staff are not subjected to an excessive and sustained level of reasonably foreseeable work-related stress that is detrimental to their health.

Employees suffering from excessive and sustained levels of work-related stress will be treated in accordance with the work-related stress code of practice and appropriate and related policies and procedures.

3. The Legal Position

2.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 states that employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

2.2 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 state that employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which their employees are exposed at work.

Both the Act and the Regulations require staff to tell their employer of any imminent risk to their health.

4. Policy Implementation

4.1 UCQ is committed to:

- follow good management practice as laid out by HSE Management Standards, which enables employers to be clear about what is expected of them.
- increase general awareness of stress and methods to prevent and combat harmful, excessive workplace stress through training initiatives.
- take action to combat and prevent workplace stressors.
- assist staff in managing stress in themselves and others.
- manage problems that do occur and provide a confidential referral service.
- manage the return to work of those who have been absent due to stress related problems.

- monitor and evaluate stress indicators.

5. Work Related Stress Code of Practice

5.1 The objectives of this Code of Practice are to summarise the process for the assessment of work-related stress for students of staff; and appropriate steps when it becomes clear or apparent that a member of staff has been adversely affected by stress in their job. The Code of Practice also explains the duties and responsibilities in respect of the prevention, recognition, evaluation and control of work-related stress.

6. Definition

6.1 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines Stress at Work as **"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them"**. Work related stress is different from reasonable pressure and challenges at work. Work-related stress can occur when pressure becomes excessive and exceeds the person's capacity and capability to cope. The stage at which pressure becomes work-related stress will vary between individuals as each person has different tolerance levels. Also, people will be affected by non-work related issues which may lead them to react to work pressures adversely.

7. Effects and Symptoms of Stress

7.1 The effects and symptoms of stress on individuals and the workplace are outlined in **Appendix 1** of the Code of Practice. Stress can involve emotional effects such as anxiety, mood swings and low confidence. Physical effects might include muscle tension, headaches, chest pains, skin rashes and fatigue. Behavioural effects may include increased a tendency to drink more alcohol and smoke more, poor concentration, apathy and an inability to deal calmly with everyday tasks and situations. Such effects can lead to an impact at work and on colleagues such as poor performance, poor time keeping, sickness absence and low staff morale. Long term psychological and physical ill health can result where pressures are intense and continue for a considerable period of time.

8. Potential Causes of work-related stress

8.1 Potential workplace stressors fall into the following areas as defined by the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards. The Management Standards define the characteristics, or culture of an organisation where the risks from work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.

8.2 The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work.

Demands	Such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
Control	Such as how much say the person has in the way they do their work
Support	Such as the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
Relationships	Such as promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
Role	Such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
Change	Such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

These categories can be found in more detail in **Appendix 2.**

Each cause or combination will have different impacts on different individuals as there is not a simple relationship between the primary causes and the levels of work-related stress that individual's experience.

9. Responsibility

9.1 Managers and Supervisors

As part of a managers existing responsibilities attempts should be made to identify/be aware early signs of stress in individual employees or groups of employees by:

- Pro-actively risk assessing areas and activities to identify, in conjunction with their staff, potential and actual stressors. Where stressors cannot be relieved by local measures using existing reporting mechanisms, to bring them to the attention of Senior Management and the Health & Safety Officer where appropriate.
- Implementing any measures identified that may help to reduce the risk to staff.
- Considering modifying hours, workload, duties and responsibilities for those vulnerable to, suffering from or being rehabilitated back to work following stress.
- Ensuring staff are coached, trained and developed to handle job responsibilities and transitions to new roles.
- Regularly review objectives and priorities and give support and direction through regular performance review and supervision.
- Encouraging effective time management by monitoring working hours, overtime, workloads and travel schedules of team members and ensuring use of holiday entitlements.
- Encouraging referral to the Occupational Health Services through the Health & Safety team where staff are experiencing stress-related health problems.

9.2 Employees

Employees have the following responsibilities to:

- Raise issues of concern with Line Manager or Health & Safety Officer. It is important to refer as soon as the level of stress is perceived to be causing problems as ignoring warning signs may exacerbate the impact on health.
- Take responsibility for seeking training/advice and supervision necessary to work effectively and safely in their role.

9.3 Health and Safety Team

The Health and Safety Team have the following responsibilities:

- Provide advice on the Work-related Stress Management Policy and risk assessment process, particularly in related to physical working conditions.
- Provide specialist advice and assistance to managers and staff in identifying workplace stressors and the organisational and procedural measures to alleviate them.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Seek specialist advice from appropriate sources in relation to modifying duties of those at work and during rehabilitation to work with stress and related problems.
- Promote services and agencies that can provide support to employees suffering from work-related stress.

10. Initial equalities impact assessment

Department: All	**Completed by:** Ben Devine	**Date of initial assessment:** 20/09/2023
Area to be assessed:	HS-001 – Appendix K	
Existing or new policy/procedure:	New	
What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)		
External guidance and requirements: Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Managing for health and safety (HSG65) **Internal guidance and requirements:** ➢ Consultation with Health and Safety Officer and Health and Safety Strategic Lead		

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure		This document provides guidance for staff on stress policy and code of practice, including employer and employee responsibilities.		
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?		All staff		
The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization (2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and (3) Foster good relations between different groups		**3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative effect impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics?:-** **High** **Medium** **Low** **No effect**	**4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).**	**5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.**
Protected characteristics	**Age**	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Disability	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Gender	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Gender reassignment	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Pregnancy and Maternity	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Race	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Religion or Belief	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

	Sexual Orientation	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?		
7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?		
8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment? (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 2)		
Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 29/09/2023

Appendix 1 – Effects and symptoms of stress

It is usually recognised that stress can affect the body in three different ways: physically, behaviourally and emotionally. Individuals can suffer from one, or a combination of these symptoms, for both short or long-term periods.

Effects on the Individual

Physical symptoms include:	Behavioural symptoms include:	Emotional symptoms include
Backache Fatigue Muscle tension Skin rashes Breathing problems Headaches Chest pains Sweating palms, Dry mouth, Nervous twitches	Absenteeism Erratic moods Apathy Increased use of alcohol/tobacco Increased use of anti-depressants Indecision Unusually emotive or impulsive Accidents Loss of appetite Evading duties or responsibilities Complaining	Anxiety Irritability Low self-esteem and confidence Depression Guilt Fear and panic Poor sleep Aggression Inappropriate behaviour Withdrawal from social contacts Mood swings

Potential effects on UCQ

- An increase in sickness absence, which can have a domino effect – one person goes sick which leads to their workload being shared among the remaining staff. They are unable to cope, which affects their health, and this could lead to greater sickness absence.
- A reduction in staff morale
- Resistance to change
- Poor staff performance
- Poor time keeping
- Poor decision making
- Increased accident rates
- Staff seeking alternative employment (which increases the expense of recruiting, training etc of new members of staff)
- Poor employee relations

Appendix 2 - Causes of work-related stress

There are six primary sources of stress at work:

Demands

- Physical working conditions – noise, temperature, lighting, workplace design, inadequate welfare facilities, badly maintained buildings, etc
- Isolation from others, overcrowding
- Deadlines and targets
- Shift work
- Long hours
- Travel
- New Technology
- Work overload
- Boring/repetitive work

Role

- Role ambiguity – no clear work objectives, no clarity re scope and responsibilities.
- Role conflict – related to job demands, personal wants, dislikes.
- Responsibility – for people and other resources.

Relationships

- Lack of recognition and support from managers and co-workers
- Bullying by managers or other members of staff
- Racial, sexual or other forms of harassment
- Conflicts between members of staff

Control

- No sense of belonging/being part of a team
- Lack of opportunities
- Not included in consultations or communications
- No involvement in decision making
- Too many demands

Support

- Poor training and lack of opportunities to improve
- Job security – lack of promotion opportunities
- Inconsistent job performance review

Change

- Poor consultation relating to organisational change
- Lack of information relating to the change (including timescales involved and
- impact on employee/team)
- Poor response to any concerns that are raised regarding the change
- Lack of support or training available