

<b>Health Risk Management Plan</b>			
<b>Risk Assessment of Stress at Work (Qualitative guide)</b>			
Policy...	Code of Practice...	Guidance✓	Procedure...
Organisation-wide✓		Local...	
Approved by the University Health & Safety Committee			
Chairman Eliot Glover	Date	4 May 2023	Review date December 2026

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## **Appendix 1 Blank Generic Stress Risk Assessment Form**

### **1 Introduction**

A stress risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what in a workplace could cause staff to suffer from work-related stress, so that you can weigh up whether you have done enough, or should do more to prevent harm. This guidance note provides some tools by which managers can take reasonable steps to minimise stress in the workplace.

### **2 Scope**

This guidance note applies to all managers at Brunel University London.

### **3 Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 Deans of College, Directors and the Heads of Departments**

Deans of Colleges, Directors of Institutes and Directors in general are responsible for implementation of this guidance, along with health and safety policies in general within their area of responsibility.

#### **3.2 Line Managers**

Individual line managers specific responsibility for ensuring compliance in respect of those they manage and supervise.

These responsibilities include (but are not limited to):

- (a) undertaking the stress risk assessment process with their member of staff;
- (b) ensuring that all necessary, and reasonable control measures are properly in place; and
- (c) referring individuals for occupational health assessment where necessary.

#### **4 What is stress?**

HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'.

Workers feel stress when they can't cope with pressures and other issues. Employers should match demands to workers' skills and knowledge. For example, workers can get stressed if they feel they don't have the skills or time to meet tight deadlines. Providing planning, training and support can reduce pressure and bring stress levels down.

Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another. Factors like skills and experience, age or disability may all affect whether an worker can cope.

Stress is not an illness but it can make you ill. Recognising the [signs of stress](#) will help employers to take steps to stop, lower and manage stress in their workplace.

Once an individual has alerted that they are experiencing stress, a risk assessment must be undertaken by the line manager in discussion with the individual as soon as possible using the Stress Risk Assessment Form (Appendix 1). Further, if the individual has been absent through long-term sickness absence, the OH report will contain information regarding any recommended action and phased return and this should be taken into account when identifying actions under the stress risk assessment.

You should arrange to discuss the contents of the OH report with the member of staff prior to their return, if possible, and plan their working arrangements accordingly, taking into account any factors that may have an impact on certain tasks, e.g. energy levels, recommended postural breaks etc. You should also update the member of staff on any organisational/departmental changes and arrange for any training/refresher training as appropriate.

## **5 There are 5 steps to undertaking a risk assessment:**

1. Identify the hazards - using the six key areas below
2. Decide who might be harmed and how – discuss the impact on the individual and gather data as appropriate
3. Evaluate the risk and take action – explore the problems and develop solutions
4. Record your findings – develop and implement action plans
5. Review and monitor your assessment over time – monitor and review action plan/s and assess effectiveness

## **6 There are 6 key areas identified with regards to stress at work**

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

For example, workers may say that they:

- are not able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- are unable to control the way they do their work
- don't receive enough information and support
- are having trouble with relationships at work, or are being bullied
- don't fully understand their role and responsibilities
- are not engaged when a business is undergoing change

The following provides more detail on these standards and will help to guide the discussion with the individual in identifying what the causes of their stress might be.

### **6.1 Job Demands**

This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment. It is advised that employees should be able to indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and that systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

In order for this to happen, where possible

- job demands should be adequate and achievable in relation to the agreed hours of work
- people's skills and abilities should be matched to the job demands
- jobs are designed to be within their level of capabilities, and
- concerns about their work environment are addressed

*In practical terms managers could*

- ❖ *Identify the workload issues with the member of staff and discuss how workloads could be managed more effectively and identify if there are aspects of the job they may find challenging. Suggest training, e.g. time management and other relevant development activities to enable staff to undertake their roles; liaising with Staff Development as necessary.*
- ❖ *Consider if flexibility could be accommodated e.g. to start/end times within the constraints of the service for a period of time.*
- ❖ *Ensure staff are clear about their targets (and those of the team if applicable), their priorities, deadlines and peak activity periods. Support staff in planning their work and inform them when changes arise. Perhaps implement weekly team meetings to discuss the anticipated workload, and broader issues and priorities, with monthly 121s with the member of staff.*
- ❖ *Provide a suitable and safe work environment, with appropriate equipment to do the work efficiently and appropriate environmental risk assessments undertaken where appropriate. Ensure that a Display Screen Equipment assessment has been undertaken if required and liaise with the Health & Safety/Human Resources office as necessary.*

## **6.2 Control**

This aspect considers how much influence a person has in the way they do their work.

In order for this to happen, where possible, they should:

- Have control over their pace of work
- Are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work
- Are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work
- Are encouraged to develop their skills
- Are able to have a say about when breaks can be taken and their work patterns
- Be aware of the policies and procedures that are in place to respond to any concerns

*In practical terms, managers could where feasible*

- ❖ *Ensure that staff have input into how they work, are clear as to their tasks/job description, have realistic deadlines and are equipped to achieve their targets.*
- ❖ *Ensure staff have regular and appropriate breaks, dependent on the tasks and service requirements and that a healthy work/life balance is encouraged.*
- ❖ *Consider discussions within the team to understand any difficulties faced and possible solutions available.*
- ❖ *Establish an environment that encourages learning and development*

### 6.3 Support

This aspect is about the support and appropriate information received from colleagues and managers, including encouragement, resources and training to give members of staff the skills to perform their role.

In order for this to happen, where possible:

- Policies and procedures should be in place to adequately support them locally
- Systems should be in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff and encourage colleagues to support each other
- Staff know what support is available and how/when to access it
- Staff know how to access the required resources to do their job
- Staff receive regular and constructive feedback

*In practical terms, managers could:*

- ❖ *Ensure regular two way communication takes place, together with team meetings, appraisals/performance development reviews etc*
- ❖ *Provide supportive and constructive criticism/feedback when required and also recognise and praise individual or group achievements, hard work and efforts*
- ❖ *Promote and encourage learning and development opportunities*
- ❖ *Ensure staff know how to access the support they need and are aware of the relevant services available within the University*

### 6.4 Relationships

This aspect includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

In order for this to happen, where possible:

- Positive behaviour is promoted at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness
- Staff share information relevant to their work
- Policies and procedures are followed to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour

*In practical terms, managers could:*

- ❖ *Encourage staff to be pro-active about reporting unacceptable behaviour and deal with this in a timely manner; ensure staff are aware of policies and systems that support positive behaviours*
- ❖ *Encourage staff to challenge behaviour of colleagues and offer appropriate learning and development activities to equip staff with the skills to deal with inappropriate behaviour*
- ❖ *Develop a positive team environment where staff feel valued, there is open and honest communication and there are opportunities for staff to discuss their concerns. Listen sympathetically to their concerns and take action as appropriate.*

- ❖ *Where there are relationship problems, tackle these early, identify issues and agree the steps to try and resolve the matter. Ensure that reported staff concerns are followed up and that feedback is provided. Provide training in interpersonal skills, conflict handling, team-building etc.*
- ❖ *Consider the impact of their own actions and decisions on staff for whom they have responsibility*

## 6.5 Role

This aspect considers whether staff understand their role and responsibilities, and that staff do not have conflicting roles.

In order for this to happen, where possible:

- Different requirements placed upon staff should be compatible
- Information is provided to enable staff to understand their role and responsibilities
- The requirements placed upon staff are clear
- Systems are in place to enable staff to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities

*In practical terms, managers could:*

- ❖ *Ensure that staff have clear roles, responsibilities and objectives which they understand and work to and that job descriptions are current. This applies from induction/probation onwards. Regularly review targets for staff and teams to ensure demands do not conflict and that staff are clear as to how they support each other's roles.*
- ❖ *Be approachable and accessible to staff to allow for discussion on roles and responsibilities i.e. through regular meetings, open door sessions, appraisals/performance reviews etc*
- ❖ *Regularly review known work peaks, tight deadlines, staffing levels and the need for staff skills development*
- ❖ *Identify jobs where stress has been or could be a problem and see what can be done to reduce the risk of stress to the job holders. Liaise with Health, Safety & Environment office or HR Administrator as required*
- ❖ *Allow for flexibility/short term measures where this is practicable.*

## 6.6 Change

This aspect is about how organisational change is managed (both large and small) and communicated within the department.

In order for this to happen, where possible:

- Provide staff with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes and be aware of the timetable for change. Consult the University Change Management Policy and liaise with Human Resources as required
- Ensure there is adequate staff consultation on proposed changes and provide opportunities for staff to influence proposals

- Advise staff of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. Where necessary provide training to support such changes
- Advise staff of how and where to access relevant support during changes

*In practical terms, managers could:*

- ❖ *Develop their own skills to ensure they can manage change effectively*
- ❖ *Ensure learning and development /training activities are offered to support staff if their jobs change*
- ❖ *Be transparent with regards to the proposals*
- ❖ *Involve and consult staff in the proposed changes and listen to their views, both as a group and individually*
- ❖ *Provide timely information and effective two-way communication, consider developing a timetable*

## **7 Now what? Evaluate the Risk and Take Action**

Arrange to meet with the member of staff as soon as possible and ask them to identify which of the hazards outlined above they believe are stressors, and how they feel that risk can reasonably be minimised. Ensure sufficient time is spent clarifying what the problem is to enable effective solutions to be developed - this may require a more detailed investigation and may involve HR and/or Occupational Health. Work with them to put an action plan in place reduce stress.

## **8 Record your findings and Review**

Complete the Stress Risk Assessment Form. If the risk assessment has identified areas of concern and some ways forward have been agreed, it is important that these are recorded these together with agreed realistic timescales for the member of staff to resume their full range of duties. Ensure that regular reviews are scheduled to measure progress and adapt the plan if and as necessary.

As explained, some members of staff will be more vulnerable to developing work related stress than others. Even where home influences are impacting on the employee's performance, it is important to be sympathetic and try to support the employee where possible. Staff should be reminded about the availability of free and confidential services for them, such as the University Counselling service and Conflict Coaching, which are available via self-referral.

The above information and examples of action are not exhaustive and if you should require any further guidance, please contact your HR Administrator/Advisor in the first instance. For questions on completing the stress risk assessment please contact [healthandsafety@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@brunel.ac.uk)

## Appendix 1: STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Occupational Health recommendations state that to manage the absence/stress-related issues of the member of staff concerned, a Stress Risk Assessment is required. The qualitative assessment is based on the Management Standards that cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being.

Please see this generic example along with the Health Risk Management Plan: Risk Assessment of Stress at Work, as a guide to assist you when completing the assessment. The items in green are considerations/suggested talking points. A blank form can be found [here](#).

Staff Name:			Department:		
Stressor	Hazards (Stressors) identified and how has it affected the employee?	Risk Evaluation Is the risk high, medium or low?	Control Measures What can be done to address and reduce this?	By whom	By when and review date
<b>Demands</b>	<i>Q's to ask: Is there too much workload, challenging work patterns and/or the work environment?</i>	<i>This Colum is populated by a combination of :how the individual perceives the impact of the stressor on themselves; and/or the content of the OH report</i>	<i>Ensure staff are clear about their targets, their priorities, deadlines and peak activity periods.</i>  <i>Support staff in planning their work and inform them when changes arise.</i>	<b>Line manager and/or the individual</b>	



<p><b>Control</b></p>	<p>How much say they have in the way they do their work?</p>		<p><i>Ensure that staff have input into how they work, are clear as to their tasks/job description, have realistic deadlines and are equipped to achieve their targets.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure staff have regular and appropriate breaks, dependent on the tasks and service requirements and that a healthy work/life balance is encouraged.</i></p>	<p><b>Line manager and/or the individual</b></p>	
<p><b>Support by Manager</b></p>	<p><i>Is there encouragement? Are resources and/or training available?</i></p>		<p><i>Ensure regular two way communication takes place, together with team meetings, appraisals/performance development reviews etc</i></p>	<p><b>Line manager and/or the individual</b></p>	
<p><b>Support by colleagues</b></p>	<p><i>Is there little or no encouragement between colleagues?</i></p>		<p><i>Encourage supportive and constructive criticism/feedback when required and also recognise and praise individual or group achievements, hard work and efforts</i></p>	<p><b>Line manager and/or the individual</b></p>	

<b>Relationships</b>	<i>This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.</i>		<i>Encourage staff to be pro-active about reporting unacceptable behaviour and deal with this in a timely manner; ensure staff are aware of policies and systems that support positive behaviours</i>	<b>Line manager and/or the individual</b>	
<b>Role</b>	<i>Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.</i>		<i>Ensure that staff have clear roles, responsibilities and objectives which they understand and work to and JD's are current and this applies from induction/probation onwards. Regularly review targets for staff and teams to ensure demands do not conflict and that staff are clear as to how they support each other's roles.</i>	<b>Line manager and/or the individual</b>	
<b>Change</b>	<i>How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.</i>		<i>Involve and consult staff in the proposed changes and listen to their views, both as a group and individually</i>	<b>Line manager and/or the individual</b>	

Additional comments	e.g. other factors unique to the individual				
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Risk assessment completed by:

Name of Line Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 9 Further Resources

[Your wellbeing \(brunel.ac.uk\)](http://brunel.ac.uk)

[Mental health and wellbeing \(brunel.ac.uk\)](http://brunel.ac.uk)

[Care First \(brunel.ac.uk\)](http://brunel.ac.uk)

[Your support network \(brunel.ac.uk\)](http://brunel.ac.uk)

[Financial health and wellbeing \(brunel.ac.uk\)](http://brunel.ac.uk)