



Prevention and Management of Work Related Stress

CU-SHE-PROC-3.14

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This procedure outlines the way in which the University will aim to prevent work-related stress (WRS) and how this will be managed, should staff experience WRS.
- 1.2 Whilst there is no legislation specifically relating to WRS, the University recognises its responsibilities under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- 1.3 The University is committed to minimising the risk of the harmful effects of WRS by:
 - Increasing awareness and understanding of WRS-related issues through training and health promotion
 - Identifying workplace stressors and manage the risks that arise from them in order to minimise the effects of WRS
 - Providing adequate resources to enable managers to implement the University's agreed WRS management procedures

- Consulting with Trade Union Safety Representatives on proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress
- Providing confidential counselling for individuals affected by WRS or external factors which impinge on their work
- Adopting a risk-based approach to the management of potential stressors in the workplace
- Ensuring all reports of WRS are appropriately dealt with and the possible causes are identified

2 Scope

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all University staff. Support for students who are experiencing difficulties can be sought from the Student Advice Centre.

3 Definitions of WRS

- 3.1 The University accepts the definition provided by the Health and Safety Executive that WRS is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work.
- 3.2 The University recognises that there is a clear distinction between work pressure which can be a motivating factor and WRS, which can occur when this pressure becomes excessive.
- 3.3 There are many causes of WRS-related stress and individuals cope in different ways to manage that stress. There are six major categories of WRS identified by the HSE and an explanation of these categories is outlined in Appendix 1. They are broadly recognised as:
- **Demands:** This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
 - **Control:** This relates to how much say a person has in the way they undertake their work
 - **Support:** This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and work colleagues
 - **Relationships:** This involves promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviours
 - **Role:** This takes account of whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures they do not have conflicting roles
 - **Change:** This embraces how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Vice-Chancellor

- To actively promote this procedure throughout the University's Executive Team
- To report, as required, to Council on the effectiveness of this procedure

4.2 **Pro-Vice-Chancellors/Directors**

- Active implementation and promotion of the principles and behaviours minimising WRS
- Alertness to employees' personal circumstances and offering additional support, where appropriate, to members of staff experiencing risks to their wellbeing derived from outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation
- Ensuring effective communication between management and staff
- In particular, ensuring effective communication where there are organisational and /or procedural changes that may give rise to increased levels of WRS in the workplace
- Where there are organisational changes being planned, ensure that the possible impact of these on employee WRS is appropriately assessed
- Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated in the School/Service Unit

4.3 **Director of Human Resources**

- Provide relevant data and feedback to Cranfield University Health and Safety Committee. This will include appropriate information from the following sources:
 - Employee Assistance Programme
 - Sickness absence records
 - Turnover rates
 - Exit interviews
 - Grievance meetings
- Engage and communicate with staff about this issue and raise awareness
- Engage effectively with Trade Union Representatives to ensure appropriate workforce involvement in change processes
- Support line managers in managing individuals experiencing stress and helping them return to work
- To work with others, including the Health and Safety Department and line managers, in implementing solutions identified by staff and monitoring and reviewing their effectiveness
- Ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place and reviewed as required
- Raise awareness amongst all staff of the importance of work/life balance and the opportunities to achieve this with the University
- Providing appropriate training in relation to the implementation of relevant procedures

4.3 **Head of Health and Safety Department**

- Act as a champion for the process
- Assist in the data collection and analysis
- Work closely with human resource and occupational health advisors
- Engage and communicate with employees and particularly employee or Trade Union Representatives
- Provide a focus for expertise on undertaking risk assessments
- Contribute towards training for managers

4.4 **Managers and Supervisors**

Individual managers and supervisors have responsibility for playing a key role in the implementation of this procedure. They will:

- Ensure good practice in all areas of staff management throughout employment
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes
- Monitor workloads to ensure, as far as possible that people have a balanced workload. One way of addressing this within Schools is through Agresso and the submission of time sheets
- Attend training as required in good management practice and health and safety
- Ensure that harassment, bullying and issues of discrimination are addressed within their area of responsibility
- Ensure that employees are consulted at all times over all aspects of their employment that may cause WRS or impact on their health and wellbeing when changes affecting them are planned
- Ensure that employees receive appropriate training and resources to carry out their duties
- Ensure that staff are provided with appropriate developmental opportunities
- Manage absence in accordance with the Absence Management Policy
- Consider workloads to ensure jobs are realistic and manageable
- Monitor working hours, overtime and holidays to encourage individuals to take breaks as required by legislation
- Familiarise themselves with the Dignity at Work Policy concerning bullying and harassment and ensure that employees are aware that this is not tolerated by the University
- Recognise that employees may have experiences in their personal lives that may make them vulnerable to pressures at work and which may have a temporary influence on their work performance e.g. health issues or personal circumstances
- Treat all discussions with employees around personal stress as confidential unless it is necessary to involve others to deal with the issue and the employee gives written/explicit agreement for disclosure
- Where appropriate engage with Health and Safety, HR Representative or Trade Union Representatives to resolve positively any actual or potential case of WRS

4.5 Employees

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and co-operate with the University in any measures taken to reduce WRS
- Be committed to avoiding causing health and wellbeing problems for other employees, including acting in accordance with the principles of the Dignity at Work Policy
- Be proactive in identifying occasions when they may be suffering from health and wellbeing problems, either work-related or due to external factors and alert their line-manager to these where appropriate
- The University recognises that, where the manager may be seen as a cause of WRS, in part or in full, concerns over this can be immediately taken to a more senior manager
- Where employees feel unable to discuss the issues with their managers, they are encouraged to discuss it with their HR representative, the Health and Safety department or their Trade Union Representative.
- Take advantage of opportunities for counselling and training when recommended, to include making use of the Employee Assistance programme
- Keep accurate records of working hours, overtime, sickness absence and holidays on the appropriate University system and take breaks as required by legislation

5 Training and Competency

- 5.1 The University has access to an eLearning module on stress awareness. This provides a useful introduction to the issue all staff are able to complete the course through the University's eLearning system by selecting 'Training Library' and then selecting the Stress Awareness course
- 5.2 The University expectation is for line managers to attend an in-house instructor led session on the Prevention and Management of WRS. It is advisable that this is refreshed every 5 years.
- 5.3 The University also offers a number of other courses which staff may find of benefit in dealing with the causes of WRS and further details can be found on the Learning and Development web site.

6 Procedure

- 6.1 It is recognised that it is best for employees and the University to prevent WRS rather than for it to be managed once an employee experiences it.
- 6.2 The University has a number of existing procedures/processes which directly contribute to the Management Standards and are designed to support staff and promote a positive working environment. These relate to:
 - Flexible working
 - Maternity and Paternity arrangements
 - Adoption leave
 - Dignity at work (which includes harassment and bullying)
 - Performance Development and Review
 - Whistleblowing
 - Attendance and Absence
 - Drug and alcohol
 - An OHSAS 18001 certified health and safety management system
- 6.3 In addition, the University provides a range of services designed to support staff including:
 - Access to professional occupational health advice
 - Provision of an Employee Assistance Programme and confidential counselling

The University Context

- 6.4 In order to understand the effectiveness of existing support measures and the extent to which WRS may be occurring within the institution; the University will use a range of measures including:
 - Staff surveys
 - Staff focus groups
 - Review of existing metrics

- 6.5 Information gathered will be used to develop a pan-institutional assessment of the hazards that may impact of levels of WRS that staff may experience. Where the information indicates a need, there may also be a need for such assessments to be developed for Schools/Service units.

Assessment of Impact of Organisational Change

- 6.6 Whether large or small, changes within the University can result in increased pressure and uncertainty for some staff. As part of the general considerations for these changes, attention must be given to the potential for WRS as a consequence.
- 6.7 This assessment must follow the following steps:
- Identify key risk factors
 - Who is likely to be affected
 - Evaluate the risks
 - Record the findings
 - Review on a regular basis
 - A template is provided at Appendix 2
- 6.8 It is recognised however that even with existing mechanisms in place, staff may still experience WRS. The following information explains the process to be followed where an employee is or believed to be experiencing WRS.

Identifying a Symptom or Problem

- 6.9 Managers and supervisors need to be aware that employees whose performance at work deteriorates or whose behaviour becomes erratic may be suffering with WRS.
- 6.10 Where managers have a concern that an employee may be experiencing WRS, this should be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the employee concerned. Where managers require advice on such a discussion they should contact their local HR support.
- 6.11 Following the meeting, where there remains a view that an employee may be experiencing WRS, the manager will need to consider if a referral for an occupational health opinion is required. It is considered appropriate for the manager (in conjunction with their Human Resource Business Partner) to refer the employee to Occupational Health or at the very least discuss with Occupational Health or Human Resources, the appropriateness of a referral. This will ensure that correct action can begin to be implemented to support the employee.
- 6.12 Where an employee is absent from work and it is believed the reason to be related to WRS (Fit Note), again it would be appropriate for a referral to be made to Occupational Health. All referrals will be in accordance with the University's Referral to Occupational Health procedure.

Employee Recognises WRS in Themselves

- 6.13 All employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety and that of others. Where an employee believes they may be experiencing work-related stress, they should bring this to the attention of an appropriate person. Ideally, in the first instance this should

be their line manager. However where this is not appropriate, alternatives may be Senior manager, HR Business Partner/Advisor, Occupational Health Advisor, Health and Safety Advisor or Trade Union Representative.

- 6.14 In order to effectively support staff, any referral to Occupational Health must be through the Line Manager and / or the Human Resources Business Partner. Due to the professional code that Occupational Health operates to, they are unable to provide reports to management without the employee's explicit consent. Also by including line managers and Human Resources, relevant information can be provided and questions asked as to how best to support the employee.

Identifying the Cause

- 6.15 It is accepted that stress can be caused by a variety of factors and these are not mutually exclusive, for example, they may not be limited to the duties of an employee but may also include factors such as the working environment, perceptions of harassment or bullying.
- 6.16 Personal or family problems may also be a significant factor. The University has a duty-of-care, as far as is reasonably practical, to put in place measures to minimise the cause of the WRS and to assist the employee to deal with it. The factors detailed below should be taken into consideration.
- 6.17 Where a cause/s and or symptoms of WRS have been noted by either the manager or the individual, action must be taken to identify the WRS factors. He/she must take into account the recognised causes of WRS (demands, control, support, relationships, role, change), and non-work related such as domestic, financial and social stressors when making their assessment of the situation. The manager will be expected to discuss the issues initially on a one-to-one basis with the individual with a view resolving the matter before there is an escalation.
- 6.18 The manager may contact Human Resources for advice and support in handling cases of WRS. At this point there may be a number of routes in managing the situation and the manager may refer to other relevant policies and procedures, including referral for an Occupational Health opinion.
- 6.19 Where there is no resolution, the manager, with the advice and support of Human Resources, will be expected to hold a meeting with the employee and where appropriate the individual may wish to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or Trade Union Representative. The purpose of the meeting is to better understand the causes and effects of the stress (work and non-work related) and to agree a mutually acceptable outcome if possible.
- 6.20 Where an individual does not feel able to meet with their line manager or if the line manager is perceived to be a cause of stress or a contributing stressor, the individual may wish to refer the matter directly to Human Resources or their Trade Union Representative acting on their behalf.

7 Records

- 7.1 All health and safety records are to be maintained in accordance with the University's health and safety record retentions schedule.

- 7.2 Records that are related to the line management of an employee are to be retained in accordance with the Human Resources Record Retention Schedule.

8 Review

- 8.1 This procedure will be subject to formal review every three years or sooner should there be a significant change.

9 References and Links

- 9.1 HSE Work Related Stress

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>

CIPD Stress in the Workplace

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/stress-factsheet>

- 9.2 Human Resource Policies and Procedures can be found here:

<https://intranet.cranfield.ac.uk/hrd/polsprocsforms/pages/default.aspx>

10 Appendices List

Appendix 1 – Management Standards

Appendix 2 – Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Template

Appendix 1

Management Standards

1. Demands

- Is there a high volume of work?
- Is the workload consistent or does it have peaks and troughs of intensity?
- Does the work require intense concentration for most of the time?
- Does a high proportion of the work have to be completed quickly?
- Are there elements of the work that have to be achieved to strict deadlines that may require working beyond normal working hours?
- Are there serious immediate consequences for the individual/colleagues/the wider unit if work is not completed accurately or on time?
- Is there an expectation/culture that employees will work beyond their contracted hours?
- Is there any evidence that employees are responding to perceived expectations created by local culture rather than actual expectations?
- Does the work activity require employees to frequently deal with confrontational situations/conversations, over the 'phone, by email or face-to-face?
- Does the physical environment itself cause additional pressure e.g. through distractions such as high noise levels?

2. Control

- To what extent does the individual manage their own workload?
- Can the individual prioritise their own workload?
- Can the individual determine the timing of their breaks?
- Can the work be delivered through flexible working hours?
- Can any element of the work be delivered through working from home?

3. Role

- Do all employees understand their role – this is particularly relevant following changes to the job description, a change to new post for an employee or organisational changes.
- Is there a generally good understanding by post holders of the way their role supports local and organisational objectives?

4. Relationships

- Is there any existing or previous history of strained working relationships amongst staff involved in the work activity (this could either be between colleagues or between staff and their line managers or other staff with whom they are required to work closely)?
- Are any forthcoming changes likely to create the potential for friction between team members or between staff and others they work closely with?
- Have there been any recent formal or informal allegations from staff of perceived bullying or harassment?

5. Support

From Managers

- Are there any managers who are lacking in leadership experience or new to the organisation?

- Have there been any recent formal or informal allegations from staff of perceived bullying or harassment, directed at their managers?
- Do time constraints make it difficult for leaders to prioritise the managerial element of their role?
- Is there any evidence to suggest managers are unfamiliar with key employee-focussed policies?
- Is sickness absence unusually high in certain work teams?
- Do staff find the work environment encouraging and supportive?

From Colleagues

- Have there been recent complaints from staff who feel colleagues don't "pull their weight"?
- Is there a tendency for employees to operate independently of colleagues, focusing on personal goals and targets rather than contributing to wider team/School/PSU objectives?
- Have there been recent incidents or allegations of disrespectful behaviour between colleagues?

6. Change (local and wider organisational change)

- Is there soon proposed to be or has there recently been any substantial local or organisational change that potentially impacts directly or indirectly on the role or morale of employees?
- Is such change currently viewed either apprehensively or negatively by a high proportion of employees?

7. External Factors for consideration

- Whilst the predominant focus here is on work-related stressors, it is important to consider non-work issues that make individual employees more vulnerable. These could include, for instance:
 - Previous history of mental health issues
 - Bereavement
 - Relationship difficulties
 - Serious illness of individual or a dependant
 - Severe financial difficulties
- Clearly these may render an employee less able to cope with even routine work pressures. Obviously, they can only be taken into consideration if the employee chooses to make their employer aware of them; if they do, an individual risk assessment should be carried out.

Appendix 2

Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Template

RISK ASSESSMENT DETAILS			
Subject of risk assessment: <i>(Individual/role/team/location/job type)</i>			
	Reason/Trigger for Assessment		
	Assessors Name/Title		Date of Assessment

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPLETION

These guidance notes are adapted from the HSE paper '*Managing the causes of work-related stress*' and provide advice on how to conduct a risk assessment of stress at work in five clear stages using this risk assessment form (quotations in the form are direct citations).

The five steps to a **Stress Risk Assessment**:

1. Identify the stress risk factors

The key work-related factors with potential to cause stress-related illness (the risk factors) are: a) Demands b) Control c) Support d) Relationships e) Role f) Change

2. Decide who might be harmed and how

Although some people may be more vulnerable to developing work-related stress illness than others, any individual could be working under conditions that could cause undue pressure and so be at risk from work-related stress. Sources that may be useful in making this assessment include; surveys, sickness absence data, staff turnover rates, exit interviews, number of referrals to Occupational Health and information from existing staff forums, as well as standard day-to-day meetings and other interactions with staff.

3. Evaluate the risks

4. Record the findings; develop and implement action plans

5. Monitor and review action plans and assess effectiveness

The Stress Risk Assessment should be reviewed on an ongoing basis, ordinarily through normal line management practices. Where appropriate, formal review dates may be built in.

Further information can be found in the document '*Managing the causes of work-related stress*' – <http://hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg218.pdf>. Cranfield University's also has its own Prevention and Management of Work-Related Stress Procedure, which should be consulted as part of the assessment process.

WORK RELATED STRESS RISK FACTORS

DEMANDS

Issues identified and Persons Affected	Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls Required	Responsibility	Priority level (H/M/L) and Timescale
For example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload/Deadlines • Hours and patterns of work • Individual capabilities • Impact on others of increased demand 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-allocate duties (temporary or permanent) • Set achievable demands in relation to workloads and deadlines • Give guidance over prioritisation of tasks 			

CONTROL (<i>How much say the person has in the way they do their work</i>)				
Issues identified and Persons Affected	Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls Required	Responsibility	Priority level (H/M/L) and Timescale
For example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern/Pace of work • Setting priorities • Opportunities to act on own initiative 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-allocate duties (temporary or permanent) • Set achievable demands in relation to workloads and deadlines • Give guidance over prioritisation of tasks 			


SUPPORT (<i>The encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues</i>)				
Issues identified and Persons Affected	Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls Required	Responsibility	Priority level (H/M/L) and Timescale
<p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff feel ill-informed about workplace issues Staff feel they do not have the opportunity to raise concerns Staff feel isolated or unsupported by Management/colleagues Support for disability or illness-related issues (including stress) Failure to praise/recognise good performance 	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure appropriate communication mechanisms are in place and are operating effectively (individual and group) Refer staff to appropriate existing policies and procedures within the University Make staff aware of supportive mechanisms available within department and wider University and how to access them, such as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), the Occupational Health Service. Set up coaching/mentoring within the department 			

RELATIONSHIPS <i>(Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and unacceptable behaviour)</i>				
Issues identified and Persons Affected	Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls Required	Responsibility	Priority level (H/M/L) and Timescale
<p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low team spirit • Staff feel bullied, harassed or victimised • Staff feel no impartial mechanism exists to enable them to raise issues • Staff perceive there to be a lack of awareness of diversity and equality issues 	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate communication mechanisms are in place and are operating effectively (individual and group) • Encourage staff to communicate verbally rather than by email • Consider management intervention to resolve specific issues appropriately and at an early stage • Communicate and make reference to appropriate existing policies and procedures within the University, including complaint procedures • Seek advice from Human Resources (HR) and/or the Occupational Health Service • Seek input from University Dignity at Work Advisors • Consider diversity and equality training if appropriate 			

ROLE (Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles)				
Issues identified and Persons Affected	Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls Required	Responsibility	Priority level (H/M/L) and Timescale
For example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity over role • Lack of clarity over who individuals report to • Perception of being pulled in different directions by conflicting demands 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure role description clearly defines the role, expectations, reporting lines etc. – consider any necessary revisions • Ensure appropriate communication mechanisms are in place and are operating effectively (individual and group) • Make effective use of PDR discussion and core training where applicable (time management and effective communication) 			

CHANGE (How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation)				
Issues identified and Persons Affected	Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls Required	Responsibility	Priority level (H/M/L) and Timescale
<p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff feel ill- informed about changes to their role/department/University and how they may be affected by them • Staff feel under-supported • Staff feel they do not have a voice 	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate communication mechanisms are in place and are operating effectively (individual and group) • Involve/engage/consult staff in a timely manner during key change initiatives, allow opportunities for staff to feed in their views • Explain the reasons and benefits for changes, as well as information on timescales • Consider training needs • Communicate information to staff regularly, in a timely manner 			

10 Document Control

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