

STRESS POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its staff. It recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing causes of stress at work.

2. Definition of Stress

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state, if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health.

3. Measures to Combat Stress

- 3.1 The University will actively seek to identify those activities and operations which give rise to stress and will conduct risk assessments to minimise and control such risks. These risk assessments will be kept under regular review including by Campus Health and Safety Committees as appropriate and will also be covered in the Faculty and Directorate Safety Statements considered annually by the Joint Committee on Health and Safety. Local management will consult with staff and trade union safety representatives on all proposed actions relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- 3.2 The University will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement its stress management policy and will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices. This will be included within the scope of the University's Management Development Programme (MDP).
- 3.3 The University will provide confidential counselling by qualified counsellors for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors, in line with its Policy and Operating Procedure for Staff Counselling.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 Managers and Supervisors have the following responsibilities under this policy:-

- conducting risk assessments within their areas of responsibility;
- ensuring good communications with staff/unions, particularly where organisational and procedural changes are contemplated;
- ensuring staff are fully trained to discharge their duties and implement recommendations;
- ensuring staff are provided with access to appropriate staff development opportunities;
- monitoring workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded;

- monitoring working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking;
- monitoring holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement;
- attending training as requested in good management practice and health and safety;
- ensuring that bullying and harassment in any form is not tolerated within their jurisdiction; and
- being vigilant and offering additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.

4.2 The Safety Unit has the following responsibilities under this policy:-

- providing training in the assessment of stress risks and stress awareness;
- providing specialist advice to managers and staff on the assessment of stress risks; and
- informing the University Joint Health and Safety Committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

4.3 The Occupational Health Medical Physician and Adviser have the following responsibilities under this policy:-

- supporting individuals who have been identified as showing signs of stress symptoms;
- supporting individuals who have been off sick with stress and advising them and the University on a planned return to work;
- referring to specialist agencies as required; and
- publicising advice for individuals as part of a positive educational message.

4.4 People Directorate staff have the following responsibilities under this policy:-

- to ensure that all managers are aware of /and have copies of this policy;
- giving guidance to managers on the stress policy;
- assisting in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics;
- advising managers and individuals on training requirements; and
- providing continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encouraging referral to the staff counselling service where appropriate.

4.5 The University Health and Safety Committee has the overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy; for commissioning such special studies or supporting activities as may be needed for its further development; for reviewing corporate risk assessments which relate to potentially stressful procedures and operations; and for revising action plans arising from the Policy.

4.6 All staff have a responsibility under this policy to raise issues of concern with safety representatives and line managers, and to accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

5. Safety Representatives

- 5.1 Safety representatives should be consulted on changes to work practices and work design which could precipitate stress. They should be able to consult with members on stress issues, including through surveys, and they should always be involved in the risk assessment processes which affect the areas they cover.
- 5.2 Safety representatives should be allowed access to collective and anonymous data held by the People Directorate relating to the incidence of stress.
- 5.3 Safety representatives should be permitted paid time-off in order to attend trade union training related to workplace stress. They should also be encouraged to conduct joint inspections where appropriate to assess potential problem areas for stress.