

# University of Leicester

## Management of Stress Policy

### **Introduction**

The University is committed to promoting the wellbeing of its employees and recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. This policy will apply to all staff within the University, managers are responsible for implementation and the University is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

### **Definition of stress**

The Health and Safety Executive define 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.

### **Policy**

This policy is supplementary to the University of Leicester Health and Safety Policy, which states that:-

*The University declares that high standards of safety and health are an integral part of the proper conduct of its affairs. The University also believes that statutory duties and requirements are the minimum standards to be met, and that it may be desirable for such standards to be exceeded.*

In compliance with this general principle the University will:-

- raise awareness of stress as an issue amongst all members of staff
- identify workplace stressors and manage the risks that arise from them so as to minimise the effects of stress
- provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the University’s agreed stress management strategy
- consult with Trade Union Safety Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress
- provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices
- provide training and information for staff and managers on how to alleviate stress at work
- provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.

### **Roles and responsibilities for effecting policy**

#### **Managers**

Managers have responsibility for playing a key role in the implementation of this policy. They will be offered training and support in order to enable them to recognise signs that an individual may be suffering from occupational stress and to be able to discuss the matter with the individual sensitively to see if any practical support can be provided. In the first instance managers may wish to discuss the matter with the

employee in confidence and then, if necessary, consult with Human Resources for further advice.

They will:-

- ensure good practice in all areas of staff management throughout employment
- be responsible for assessing the risks of stress and, working with relevant colleagues across the university, including Human Resources, for taking steps to control such risks as are identified
- 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 are neither under loaded nor over loaded
- attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction
- be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

### **Individual Staff**

- If an individual believes there is a factor in the workplace causing stress, then this should be brought to the attention of the line manager
- Anyone who feels they are suffering from stress should, wherever possible, inform their line manager or an alternative senior member of staff so that the department will have an opportunity to resolve the problem. If anyone feels that they are unable to raise the matter within their department, they should consider referral to Human Resources or their trade union representative
- Individuals have a responsibility for making reasonable adjustments where working practices have to change, sometimes due to circumstances beyond the University's control
- Where strategies for combating stress have been identified, staff should adopt them. Staff are encouraged to access support from Staff Counselling and Wellbeing.

### **Human Resources will:-**

- advise managers and individuals on training requirements and opportunities
- be responsible for providing training in the effective management of stress for individual staff and managers
- give guidance to managers on their responsibilities under the stress policy.
- provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to Staff Counselling and Wellbeing where appropriate
- assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy by reference to compliance with the HSE's Stress Management Standards and will report accordingly to the University Health and Safety Management Group.

The **Staff Counselling and Wellbeing** and **Occupational Health Services** will ensure adequate support for individuals experiencing stress and advise on training needs.

- Staff Counselling & Wellbeing is available on a confidential basis for emotional support and employees may self-refer at any stage should they so wish

- The Occupational Health Service will support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work
- The Occupational Health Service will inform the University of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

#### **Union Safety Representatives**

- Safety Representatives will be consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress
- Safety Representatives will be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys
- Safety Representatives will be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any Trade Union training relating to workplace stress.

#### **Safety Committee and Health and Safety Management Group**

- The Safety Committee will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented and will regularly review it and update it as necessary
- The Health and Safety Management Group will oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety and will report on these matters to the Safety Committee.