Reference:	Work –Related Stress Management Policy and Code of Practice
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Review Date:	March 2015
Ratified by:	University Council
Date Ratified:	26th November 2015
Version:	2.2
Status:	Final

Version history	
V1	
V2.1	Agreed 26th Nov 2015
V2.2	Updated 25.2.16
Review date	2019/20

WORK-RELATED STRESS

POLICY STATEMENT

AND

CODE OF PRACTICE

Work Related Stress Policy Statement

INTRODUCTION

As an employer, the University places a high value on maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all its employees and recognises that this duty of care extends to mental as well as physical health at work. Mental health problems have many causes, including both stresses in the workplace and in the life of employees away from work. In cases where employees are absent due to stress, the University will follow procedures under the Sickness Absence and Monitoring Policy.

This policy statement is underpinned by the advisory and monitoring activities of the University Health & Safety, Council Standing Committee and Health and Safety Consultative Committee.

POLICY STATEMENT

The University recognises that that all staff are valued as 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 life of the University and play an important role in achieving the objectives of the University's Corporate Plan.

The University 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 relating to health & safety and employment and is committed to identifying sources of stress in the workplace and taking action to eliminate or reduce them. This commitment is central to the ethos and mission of the University, coupled with its legal obligations arising from EU and UK legislation.

Whilst the University 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 related present and future policies and procedures.

THE LEGAL POSITION

- 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.
- 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.

ACTION TO IMPLEMENT POLICY

The University is committed:

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

Work Related Stress Code of Practice

Liverpool Hope University 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. Liverpool Hope University and is committed to identifying sources of occupational work-related stress and taking action to eliminate or reduce them, where this is possible.

The objectives of this Code of Practice are to summarise the process for the assessment of work-related stress for groups of staff; and appropriate steps when it becomes clear or apparent that a member of staff has been adversely affected by stress in their particular job.

The Code of Practice also explains the duties and responsibilities in respect of the prevention, recognition, evaluation and control of work-related stress. The Work-related Stress Management Policy Statement and associated guidance, which can be found on the Health & Safety website, is referenced throughout this Code of Practice.

Definition of Work-Related Stress

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.

Effects and Symptoms of Stress

The effects and symptoms of stress on individuals and the workplace are outlined in Appendix 2 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.

Potential Causes of Work-Related Stress

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.

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. These are:

- 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.
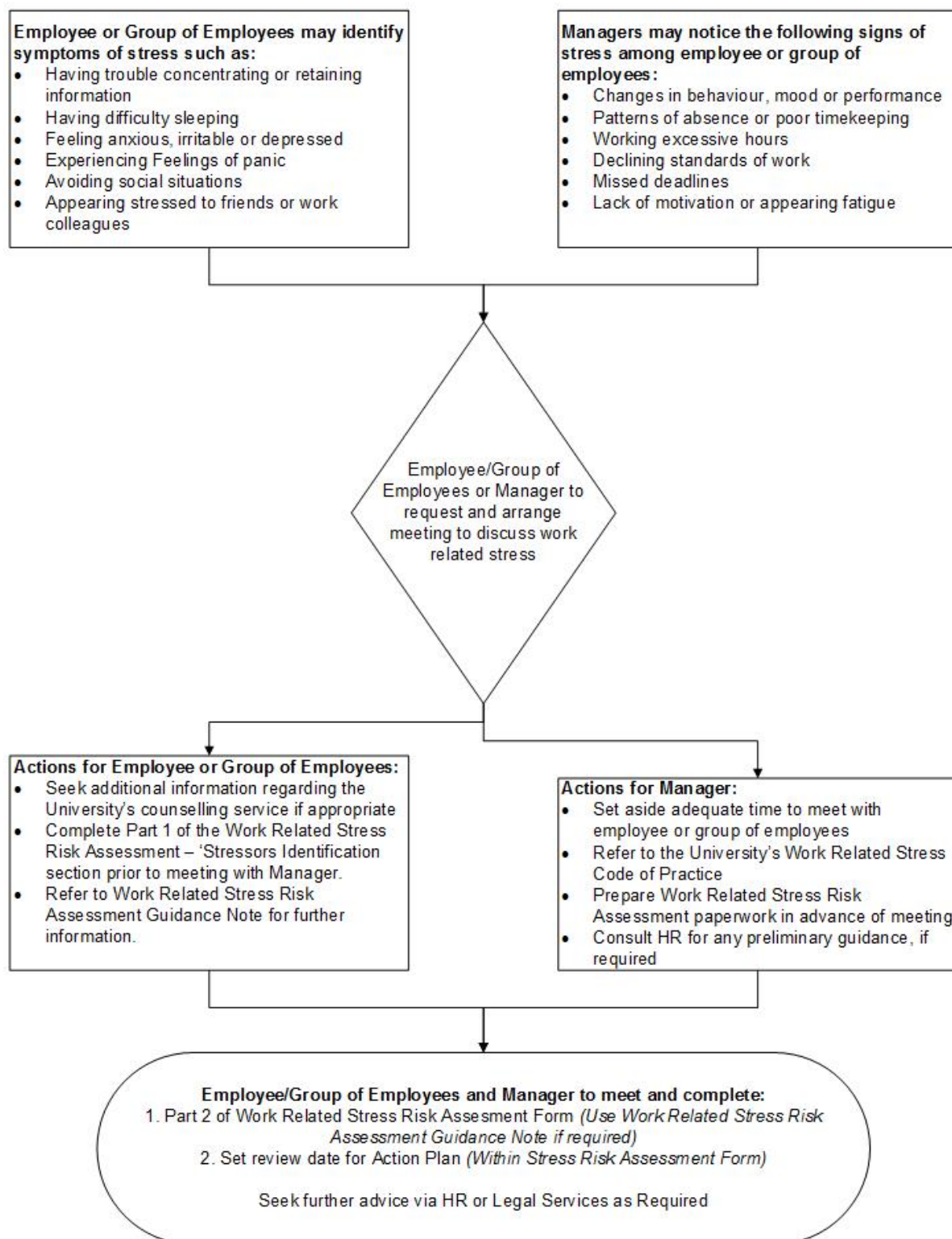
These categories can be found in more detail in Appendix 1.

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.

Risk Assessment Process

Risk Assessments at the University are based on the above Management Standards for examining work-related stress and the process shown below shows the suggested actions for identifying and dealing with work-related stress:

Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Process Flowchart

Employee or Group of Employees may identify symptoms of stress such as:
- Having trouble concentrating or retaining information
- Having difficulty sleeping
- Feeling anxious, irritable or depressed
- Experiencing Feelings of panic
- Avoiding social situations
- Appearing stressed to friends or work colleagues

Managers may notice the following signs of stress among employee or group of employees:
- Changes in behaviour, mood or performance
- Patterns of absence or poor timekeeping
- Working excessive hours
- Declining standards of work
- Missed deadlines
- Lack of motivation or appearing fatigue

Employee/Group of Employees or Manager to request and arrange meeting to discuss work related stress

Actions for Employee or Group of Employees:
- Seek additional information regarding the University's counselling service if appropriate
- Complete Part 1 of the Work Related Stress Risk Assessment – 'Stressors Identification section prior to meeting with Manager.
- Refer to Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Guidance Note for further information.

Actions for Manager:
- Set aside adequate time to meet with employee or group of employees
- Refer to the University's Work Related Stress Code of Practice
- Prepare Work Related Stress Risk Assessment paperwork in advance of meeting
- Consult HR for any preliminary guidance, if required

Employee/Group of Employees and Manager to meet and complete:
1. Part 2 of Work Related Stress Risk Assesment Form (*Use Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Guidance Note if required*)
2. Set review date for Action Plan (*Within Stress Risk Assessment Form*)

Seek further advice via HR or Legal Services as Required

RESPONSIBILITIES

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 Personnel Office or Legal Services 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 Personnel Office where staff are experiencing stress-related health problems.

Personnel

- Provide specialist advice and assistance to managers and staff in identifying workplace stressors and the organisational and procedural measures to alleviate them.
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Seek specialist advice from Occupational Health Services 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.

Employees

- Raise issues of concern with Supervisor, Line Manager or Safety Co-ordinator. 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.
- Employees are also required to take responsibility for seeking training/advice and supervision necessary to work effectively and safely in the job.

Legal Services

Provide advice on the Work-related Stress Management Policy and risk assessment process, particularly in related to physical working conditions.

Health & Safety Consultative Committee

Advise on the appropriateness and adequacy of the University's arrangements for the identification and management of work-related stress.

Health & Safety, Council Standing Committee

Oversee the monitoring of the efficiency of the Work-related Stress Management Policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

APPENDIX 1 - CAUSES OF WORKPLACE STRESS

There are six primary sources of stress at work:

1. *Demands*

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

2. *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

3. *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

4. *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

5. *Support*

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

6. *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

APPENDIX 2 – 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 etc.	- 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

Effects on the University

- 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 leads 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