Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

POLICY STATEMENT ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

May 2016

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

Policy Statement on Occupational Stress

This policy statement is intended to cover all grades of employees at the Swansea University

Introduction

Swansea University is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. The University recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress. This policy will apply to all employees of the University. Heads of Colleges/Directors of Professional Services Units (PSUs) are responsible for implementation and the University is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Legal Framework

The University recognises that, as an employer, it has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that its workplaces are safe and healthy. This includes taking steps to make sure our employees do not suffer stress-related illness as a result of their work

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, the University must take account of the risk of stress-related ill health. The main provisions of these Regulations as far as stress is concerned are: a duty to assess, to apply principles of prevention, to ensure employees' capability and provide training, and certain duties towards young people.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as ***"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands 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

In order to tackle work related stress, the University will:

- Identify workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be periodically undertaken.
- Consult as appropriate with Trade Union Safety Representatives and Departmental Safety Advisors on proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- Provide training for Heads of Colleges/Directors and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- Provide appropriate support for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- Provide support to Heads of Colleges/Directors to implement the University's agreed stress management policy.

Responsibilities:

Heads of Colleges/Directors

It is the responsibility of Heads of Colleges/Directors and employees in authority to create a working environment that avoids or reduces potential stressors. They should:

- Establish clear frameworks and effective communication channels for individuals and groups, e.g. College/Department meetings, sub groups, Professional Reviews (PDRs) and one to one meetings.
- Ensure staff understand their roles and responsibilities, are fully trained and workloads are perceived to be reasonable and equitable for each member of staff.
- Create a culture in which it is clear that bullying and harassment is not tolerated and deal promptly with allegations of inappropriate behaviour (see the University's Dignity at Work and Study Policy) and ensure that procedures are in place to support staff.
- Recognise that staff need to balance their work and home lives and responsibilities and be prepared to consider alternative ways of working, on a temporary or permanent basis. (See the University's guidance on Family Friendly Policies).
- Offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

Occupational Health

As specialists in the field, Occupational Health staff are a valuable resource for information and guidance. They have a responsibility to:

- Provide specialist medical advice and information on the management of stress.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them, in conjunction with Human Resources and their Heads of College/Director, on a planned return to work.
- Refer individuals to counsellors or specialist agencies, as required.
- Promote health and individual stress management techniques.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of medical measures to reduce stress.
- Inform the University and the Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee of any changes and developments in the medical field of stress at work.

Safety, Health & Environmental Services (SHE)

As specialists in the field, SHE staff are a valuable resource for information and guidance. They have responsibility to:

- Provide specialist safety advice and information on managing stress.
- Advise on implementing stress risk assessments.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of safety measures to reduce stress.
- Inform the University and the Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee of any changes and developments in the safety field of stress at work.

Staff Counselling Service

The Staff Counselling Service will:

- Provide a confidential, professional counselling service for staff.
- Offer 6 sessions paid for by the University but based off campus.
- Accept staff either through referral or by personal request.
- Cover a variety of issues including work and relationship problems, stress, bereavement, depression and difficulties with professional and educational achievements.
- Help individuals who access their service work through their current situation with an aim of helping them towards a better understanding of themselves and the problem.

Development & Training Services / APECs

The Development & Training Service has responsibility to:

- Provide Heads of Colleges/Directors training opportunities in identifying, preventing and eliminating causes of stress.
- Provide employees training in personal stress management techniques.
- Arrange for trained facilitators to attend Away Days to improve discussions on Stressors within Colleges/Directorates where requested.

Human Resources Department

The Director of Human Resources and professional Human Resources staff have responsibility to:

- Provide guidance to Heads of Colleges/Directors on the occupational stress policy.
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Provide support to Heads of Colleges/Directors and individuals where stress factors are identified and encourage referral to the Occupational Health function, where appropriate.
- Advise and support Heads of Colleges/Directors on the guidelines for managing sickness absence from work.
- Advise and support Heads of Colleges/Directors and individuals on the Dignity at Work Policy.
- Provide a confidential point of contact for individuals to discuss issues causing them stress and, if possible, facilitate a solution.
- Facilitate periodic risk assessments in accordance with HSE standards.

Employees

Individual employees have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that they are not the cause of undue stress through harassment, bullying or by other means, either intentionally or unintentionally.
- Accept opportunities for support and counselling, when recommended.

- Be aware of their own responsibility and duty of care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues, and raise issues of concern with the College/Directorate Safety Advisor, Trade Union Safety Representative, Heads of Colleges/Directors, Human Resources, Harassment Advisor, Occupational Health, G.P. or Staff Counselling Service, as appropriate.
- Ensure that that they are aware of and follow the principles outlined in the University's "Dignity at Work and Study Policy", "Race Equality Policy" and the University's booklet "Race Relations and You".

In addition, the University provides a range of staff training and development events on such issues as managing stress, time management, assertiveness, etc., and individuals should request to attend such courses, where appropriate.

Function of Trade Union Safety Reps

- Trade Union Safety Representatives should constructively advise on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.
- Trade Union Safety Representatives should consult with members and advise on the issue of stress.
- Trade Union Safety Representatives will be allowed access to anonymous data from stress surveys.
- Trade Union Safety Representatives should be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any Trade Union training relating to workplace stress.
- Trade Union Safety Representatives should assist Colleges/Directorates to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

Function of College/Directorate Safety Advisors

- College/Directorate Safety Advisors will provide a link between the Safety, Health & Environmental Service and the Head of College/Directorate, enabling the transfer of information on stress related matters.
- College/Directorate Safety Advisors will act as a contact point for individuals wishing to raise a stress safety risk or concern, and offer or seek advice as necessary.

Role of the Safety Policy Committee and HR Policy Committee

- The Safety Policy Committee and the HR Policy Committee of Swansea University will ensure that this policy is implemented.
- The Health and Safety at Work Consultative Sub Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

Risk Assessment

SHE will ask Heads of Colleges/Directors to provide risk assessments on an annual basis

The risk assessment has been developed in accordance with guidance provided by the Health and Safety Executive based on the identification of hazards in accordance with the HSE management standards. A checklist has been developed from the HSE Management Standards (see appendices III and IV). The checklist will be circulated to Heads of Colleges/Directors annually.

A University wide survey will be conducted from time to time to measure the overall level of risk.

Review

The policy shall be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

<u>May 2016</u>

APPENDIX I

Draft Guidance Notes on the management of absence from work due to stress related illness

1.   There may be occasions where stress impacts so negatively on health that individuals take time off work, whether or not they consider that pressures of work or activities at work have any relationship to their ill health.

2.   It is the University's objective to minimise such sickness absence, whether or not it is believed to be work related, to provide support for its staff and to help plan a structured return to work. The University will seek to involve trade union representatives throughout this process where the employee is a member of a recognised trade union. It is important that individuals in such circumstances seek immediate advice from their GP since anxiety and depression are medical conditions, which can be effectively treated through medicine and counselling and through a structured return to the work environment.

3.   It is the responsibility of Heads of Colleges/Directors to ensure that a Human Resources Business Partner is notified as soon as possible, and within 3 days, through the normal procedures for notification of absence of a College/Directorate being notified of an employee being absent from work through "stress". This also applies, as a precaution, where a doctor's note refers to "depression" or "anxiety".   In addition Heads of Colleges/Directors are advised to discuss the issue with the relevant Human Resources Business Partner.

4.   On receipt of the notification, the Human Resources Business Partner will then liaise with the Occupational Health Department to arrange an appointment to see the employee, as soon as possible, if the absence is likely to exceed two weeks, using the referral form attached.

5.   The University will offer support and advice, through the Occupational Health Department, for such staff to aid their recovery. This provision is available whether or not the stress is claimed to be work-related.

6.   Where the employee indicates to the Occupational Health Department that the absence may be work related, the Occupational Health representative will, with the employee's consent, inform an appropriate Human Resources Business Partner, of the circumstances that are contributing to the employee's stress.

7.   The Human Resources Business Partner will, on receipt of the Occupational Health report, discuss its content with the appropriate line manager. They will consider the circumstances of the employee's stress and will give consideration to an appropriate strategy for the individual to return to work, which may include:

- adjustments to the individual's duties, workload or place of work where this can reasonably be achieved, either on a temporary or longer term basis, with consideration of any salary implications
- an initial return to work on a part-time basis
- the offer of reasonable alternative employment within the University with the corresponding terms and conditions for the new post

- referral to the counselling service

8.   When appropriate a meeting will be organised by the Line Manager, with the Human Resources Business Partner, employee and, as appropriate, their trade union representative or work colleague. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss and agree the arrangements and a timetable for the return to work.

9.   It is the objective of the University that an employee absent from work through stress, depression or anxiety will be able to return to work at the earliest opportunity.

10.   When the employee returns to work, the Line Manager should meet with the member of staff to discuss any likely problems or continuing risks. Although this will be an informal meeting, if the employee wishes to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague, they should be permitted to do so.   A note should be made of any action points arising from the discussion.

11.   Where the circumstances leading to the employee's stress are not straightforward and relate to inter-personal conflicts, the appropriate Head of College/Director should consider an independent review, which may involve a representative of the Human Resources Department and/or senior member of staff from another College/Directorate, to provide an objective analysis of the causes of the conflict and possible solutions.

12.   Where a return to work is unlikely in the foreseeable future, because of the severity of the medical condition or where the University cannot reasonably create the changes to working environment or conditions that the employee sets out as a precondition to return to work, then early retirement on medical grounds or, if this is not possible, termination of employment on grounds of medical incapacity may be appropriate.

13.   Where "stress", "anxiety" or "depression" is given as the reason for frequent, short-term absences, the Line Manager should seek advice from a Human Resources Business Partner. The Line Manager will be expected to meet with the employee accompanied by a Human Resources Business Partner to seek to address any underlying work problems as soon as possible, involving, where appropriate and at the request of the employee, the employee's trade union representative or work colleague.

14.   The University wishes to act supportively and speedily in response to absences that result from work-related stress. In the event of the employee not wishing to reveal the cause of the illness or not willing to be referred to a suitably qualified medical practitioner, a Human Resources Business Partner or Line Manager will remind the employee of the importance of this and will consult with the employee's representative to better understand genuine reasons why an employee is not responding. However, if the employee does not respond, the University would follow the long-term sickness absence procedures contained within the Sickness Pay Policy L8131.

15.   In the event of a member of staff refusing to attend an assessment or withholding consent for a GP's medical report, any action taken or

recommendations made will be based on the medical information available to the Occupational Health service, at the time.

16. Staff who refuse or fail to attend a medical assessment either with the Occupational Health service will have a further appointment made. Should staff then refuse or fail to attend the re-arranged medical assessment with the Occupational Health service without an explanation acceptable to the University they will lose their entitlement for Occupational Sick Pay.

Swansea University
Occupational Health Service

Stress Related Illness - Referral Form

Section 1: Employee Details

Surname: _____

Forenames: _____

Address:
(on Drs Certificate) _____

_____

_____

Date of Birth: _____

Position/Job Title _____

College/PSU _____

Male ☐ *Female* ☐

Section 2: Nature and Period of Illness

Date of First Absence: ☐

Date Notified: ☐

Date of Referral: ☐

Diagnosis: ☐

Is Diagnosis: Work Related ☐ Non-Work Related ☐

Name of Referrer: _____

Position/Job Title: _____

Contact Number: _____

APPENDIX II

Recognising and Dealing with Stress

Recognising the symptoms of stress in others:

- Increases in overall sickness absence, particularly frequent short term sickness absence
- Poor work performance: less output, lower quality, poor decision-making
- Changes in relationships at work: conflict between colleagues
- Changes in staff attitude and behaviour; loss of motivation or commitment, poor time-keeping, working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness
- Lack of enthusiasm
- High accident rates

Recognising stress in yourself:

- Tiredness, aching muscles, disturbed sleep
- Loss of appetite, indigestion, stomach problems
- Loss of sexual drive
- Dependence on alcohol or drugs, excessive smoking
- Headaches
- Inability to relax
- A sense of being out of control
- Difficulty retaining information
- Poor concentration and indecisiveness
- Worrying
- Increased irritability
- Increased incidence of frequent short term sickness absence
- Change in attitudes to work/colleagues
- Feeling anxious or depressed

Some of these symptoms may not be stress related but could indicate a more serious underlying condition. If the symptoms persist please consult your General Practitioner.

Individual Stress Avoidance Techniques:
- Relax
- Find out the things that help you relax and do them regularly
- When busy or feeling under pressure, the things that help you relax are the first to be ignored. For example, you may feel too busy to exercise but these are the things that help you to relax enabling you to manage your time in a more productive way, both at home and at work
- A balanced diet and regular meals will help you to cope with stress
- Exercise regularly - the feel good factor - there is evidence that this is a major help in dealing with stress. If exercise is undertaken it can take three to four weeks before it is enjoyed so persevere
- Remember, if you are feeling that stressors are becoming overwhelming, the University provides Counsellors with whom you can discuss any problem in total confidence

<u>Heads of College/Director Stress Checklist</u>

Notes on Using the Checklist

- The Checklist has been developed from the HSE Management Standards. These and much more advice on stress are available at the HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk/stress

- You may wish to obtain the views of your members of staff before completing the Checklist. A separate OPTIONAL staff questionnaire form is available for this purpose. If you wish to do this you should only do so **with the consent** of members of staff. This should be discussed with members of staff in advance of circulating the questionnaire.

- You are asked to answer YES, NO or DON'T KNOW. The situation may not be clear-cut and you should tick the answer that applies in most cases. You may wish to add a comment to explain the actual situation.

- Where the answer to any question is NO or DON'T KNOW you should add a brief comment.

- Where you have identified problems you will wish to identify actions to address them. A brief note of intended actions should be included in the appropriate box. The HSE have provide guidance through their management guidance –*Real Solutions, Real People* on possible actions for each of the management standard areas, copies of these are available for your information and assistance.

- You should return the form when completed. Any forms completed by members of your staff are for your purposes only and should not be returned.

1. DEMANDS

	Yes	No	D/know	Comments
a. Do you provide your staff with adequate and achievable demands in relation to their hours of work?				
b. Do you consider that your staff's skills and abilities are matched to their job demands?				
c. Are jobs designed to be within the capabilities of your staff?				
d. Are any concerns about your staff's work environment addressed?				

2. CONTROL

	Yes	No	D/know	Comments
a. Where possible, do your staff have control over their pace of work?				
b. Are your staff encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work?				
c. Where possible, are your staff encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work?				
d. Do you encourage employees to develop their skills?				
e. Do your staff have flexibility over when breaks can be taken?				
f. Are your staff consulted over their work patterns?				

3. SUPPORT

	Yes	No	D/know	Comments
a. Do you consider that the University has policies and procedures to adequately support members of staff?				
b. Do you consider that the University has systems in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff?				
c. Do you have systems in place to enable and encourage members of staff to support their colleagues?				
d. Do you consider that members of staff know what support is available and how and when to access it?				
e. Do your staff have the necessary resources to do their job?				
f. Do your staff receive regular and constructive feedback about their work?				

4. RELATIONSHIPS

	Yes	No	D/know	Comments
a. Do you promote positive behaviour at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness?				
b. Do members of staff share information relevant to their work?				
c. Do you consider that the University has the appropriate policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour?				
d. Do you consider that the University has systems in place to enable and encourage you to deal with unacceptable behaviour?				
e. Do you have systems in place to enable and encourage members of staff to report unacceptable behaviour?				

5. ROLE

	Yes	No	D/know	Comments
a. Do you ensure that, as far as possible, the different requirements placed upon your staff are compatible?				
b. Do you provide information to enable members of staff to understand their role and responsibilities?				
c. Do you ensure that, as far as possible, the requirements you place upon members of staff are clear?				
d. Are systems in place to enable members of staff to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities?				

6. CHANGE

	Yes	No	D/know	Comments
a. Do you provide members of staff with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes?				
b. Do you consider that the University ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for members of staff to influence proposals?				
c. Are your staff aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs? If necessary, are your staff given training to support any changes in their jobs?				
d. Are your staff aware of any timetables for change?				
e. Do you consider that relevant support is available to members of staff during changes?				

NOTES ON STAFFING RISK ASSESSMENT

An assessment of risk is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your School/Department, could cause harm to staff, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. The aim is to make sure that no one becomes ill as a result of working conditions or workload. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives, and affect the effective operation of the University.

Hazard means anything that can cause harm (e.g. excessive workload, unreasonable deadlines, etc).

Risk is the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard.

- **Look for the hazards**
  Consider the deployment of your staff, their working arrangements and the expected workloads. Assess whether there are any factors that could cause unreasonable levels of anxiety or stress, e.g. a major new initiative or a significant reorganisation that could reasonably be expected to increase the risk of harm. Consider whether working arrangements have led to stress-related absence in the past. Ignore the trivial and concentrate only on significant hazards. As a guide:

- **Decide who might be harmed, and how**
  Pay particular attention to staff returning to work after a period of absence, inexperienced staff, staff in new roles, lone workers and those with special needs.

- **Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done**
  Consider the Manager's Actions List within the Occupational Stress Policy. This is intended to create a working environment that reduces potential stressors. Ensure that, in so far as is practicable, the steps outlined have been followed. Are all your Management Team well trained and do they understand their responsibilities under the Occupational Stress Policy?
  Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low.
  If you find that something needs to be done, ask yourself: (a) Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? (b) If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

- **Record your Findings**
  You must record the significant findings of your assessment. This means (1) writing down the more significant hazards and (2) recording your most important conclusions - for example,
  TQA visit is forthcoming: all staff have been briefed, are clear what is expected and know who they can speak with if there are any problems; workloads have been rebalanced or non-urgent work postponed, to allow for the extra workload involved.
  Change in work patterns has been agreed: all staff have been briefed; opportunities to raise individual concerns have been provided; transitional arrangements are made where there are difficult domestic circumstances; periodic review has been agreed.
  You must also inform your staff about your findings.

Staff Stress Questionnaire

Notes on Using the Questionnaire

- The Questionnaire has been developed from the HSE Management Standards. These and much more advice on stress are available at the HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk/stress

- Heads of Colleges/Directorates have been asked to complete a Checklist about levels of stress in their School/Department. As part of that process they may wish to obtain the views of members of staff before completing the Checklist. A separate OPTIONAL staff questionnaire form is available for this purpose. Heads of Colleges/Directorates should do this only **with the consent** of members of staff. This should be discussed with members of staff in advance of circulating the questionnaire.

- You are asked to answer YES, NO or DON'T KNOW. The situation may not be clear-cut and you should tick the answer that applies in most cases.

1. DEMANDS

	YES	NO	D/KNOW
a) Does your role provide you with adequate and achievable demands in relation to your agreed hours of work?			
b) Are your skills and abilities matched to the job demands?			
c) Is your job within your capabilities?			
d) Are any concerns about your work environment addressed?			

2. CONTROL

	YES	NO	D/KNOW
a) Where possible, do you have control over your pace of work?			
b) Are you encouraged to use your skills and initiative to do your work?			
c) Where possible, are you encouraged to develop new skills to help you undertake new and challenging pieces of work?			
d) Are you encouraged to develop your skills?			
e) Do you have flexibility when breaks can be taken?			
f) Are you consulted over your work patterns?			

3. SUPPORT

	YES	NO	D/KNOW
a) Does the University/College/PSU have adequate policies and procedures to support you?			
b) Do you receive adequate support from your Head of College/Director			
c) Do you receive adequate support from your colleagues?			
d) Do you know what support is available and how and when to access it?			
e) Do you have adequate resources to do your job?			
f) Do you receive regular and constructive feedback?			

4. RELATIONSHIPS

	YES	NO	D/KNOW
a) Do you consider that the University/College/PSU promotes positive behaviour at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness?			
b) Do colleagues share information relevant to your work with you?			
c) Are you aware of University policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour?			
d) Does your Head of College/Director deal with unacceptable behaviour?			
e) Do you consider that there are adequate systems in place to enable and encourage you to report unacceptable behaviour?			

5. ROLE

	YES	NO	D/KNOW
a) Do you think that as far as possible, the different requirements of your role are compatible?			
b) Do you have sufficient information to enable you to understand your role and responsibilities?			
c) Are the requirements of your role clear?			
d) Are you able to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts you may have in your role and responsibilities?			

6. CHANGE

	YES	NO	D/KNOW
a) During periods of change, have you received timely information to enable you to understand the reasons for proposed changes?			
b) Do you consider that you are adequately consulted on changes and given opportunities for you to influence proposals?			
c) Are you made aware of the probable impact of any changes to your job? If necessary, are you given training to support any changes in your job?			
d) Are you aware of any timetables for changes?			
e) Do you have access to relevant support during changes?			