

Work Related Stress Management Policy
Policy ✓ Code of Practice... Guidance... Procedure...
Organisation-wide ✓ Local...
Approved by the University Health & Safety Committee
Chairperson Dr Manuel Alonso Date 19 th May 25 Review date May 2028

1. Introduction

Brunel University of London is committed to fostering a supportive and healthy environment for all staff and students. When managed effectively, stress can be a motivating factor; however, excessive or prolonged stress can negatively impact wellbeing, academic performance, and workplace productivity. This policy outlines the university's approach to managing stress, raising awareness, and providing support.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Raise awareness of stress and its impact.
- Promote a culture of openness where staff feel able to discuss stress-related issues.
- Provide resources and support to help manage stress effectively.
- Encourage proactive measures to prevent stress-related problems.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed by Brunel University of London. A separate process is in place for student welfare, details of which can be found [here](#).

4. Definition of Stress

The HSE defines stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to the excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them’.

Stress can arise from a number of different sources, workload, workplace pressure, financial difficulties, personal circumstances, or environmental factors. While some stress can be beneficial, chronic stress can lead to mental and physical health issues. Individuals may experience stress differently based on protected characteristics such as disability, race, gender, or religion, and that stress can be compounded by cultural, racial, gendered or socioeconomic factors. Stress can also have a heightened impact on neurodivergent employees, potentially affecting their ability to manage routines, communication, and sensory environments. Without appropriate support or adjustments, this may lead to increased anxiety, reduced productivity, or disengagement from the workplace.

Work-related stress, or occupational stress, is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the demands of a job don't match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker, potentially leading to poor health. These demands can include high workloads, unrealistic targets, lack of control over work, insufficient support from managers or colleagues, difficult relationships, or unclear job roles.

At Brunel we aim to create an inclusive culture where staff feel safe to speak up about stress without stigma or fear of discrimination.

5. Legal Requirements

Brunel University of London acknowledges its responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which require employers to conduct risk assessments for work-related stress and implement measures to mitigate risks. The university follows the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards for Stress, addressing six key areas: demands, control, support, relationships, role, and change.

6. Responsibilities

University Senior Management (Executive Board; Vice Chancellor; Chief Operating Officer): Ensure appropriate policies, procedures, and resources are in place to promote wellbeing and mitigate work related stress risks, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Directors/Associate Directors/Heads of Departments/Line Managers: Identify and address signs of stress in team members, conduct stress risk assessments and provide appropriate support or referrals as required.

All other staff: Engage with the work-related stress risk assessment process.

Human Resources: Provide advice and support in relation to reasonable adjustments, flexible working and Occupational Health Referrals.

Health, Safety & Environment Team: Provide advice and guidance on work related stress management and the work related stress risk assessment process.

7. Proactive vs. Reactive Approaches

Proactive Approaches:

The University will:

- Conduct wellbeing surveys to assess work related stress levels using a range of approaches.
- Promote a positive work-life balance and stress awareness.
- Provide training and guidance on stress management and mental health.
- Implement flexible work and study arrangements where possible.

Reactive Approaches:

The University will:

- Provide immediate support through counselling and wellbeing services.
- Address identified stressors through workload adjustments.
- Implement structured intervention plans and follow-ups.

8. Stress Risk Assessment

The Workplace Stress Risk Assessment and associated guidance can be found on the HEST Policy web pages under “W” ([Health and Safety Policies and Guidance](#)). These assessments focus on work demands, support structures, role clarity, and organisational changes. Managers will work with staff to address concerns and ensure a supportive environment. If you require assistance with the document please contact healthandsafety@brunel.ac.uk.

9. Support & Resources

The university provides various support mechanisms, including:

- [Counselling Services](#): Confidential support for staff experiencing stress.
- [Occupational Health](#): Assistance for work-related stress issues.
- [Training & Workshops](#): Stress management, mindfulness, EDI and resilience training sessions.
- Flexible Working & Study Arrangements: Where feasible, adjustments to work or study patterns to help manage stress levels – speak with your line manager and contact your [HRBP](#).

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as required due to significant changes in practice or legislation, to ensure that it remains effective in addressing work related stress within the university community.

11. Contact Information

For support or further information, please contact:

[OD/Wellbeing Team](#)

[Human Resources](#)

[Care First](#)

[Health, Safety & Environment Team](#)