

University of Sussex Organisational Stress Risk Assessment

The university is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff. The university has a legal duty to protect workers from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it. This webpage provides an outline of the approach, process and findings of the assessment and signposts to support for staff.

What is Stress?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.' Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another and factors like skills and experience, age or disability may also have an impact on whether a worker can cope.

Organisational Level Stress Risk Assessment

The University of Sussex Organisational Stress Risk Assessment follows the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [Management Standards](#) which indicate the primary causes of stress related illness and is aligned to the HSE's guidance on [Tackling Work-related Stress using the Management Standards](#). The Standards are:

Standard	Condition
Change	How well organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated within the organisation.
Control	Autonomy - how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
Demands	Workload, work patterns and the work environment.
Relationships	Positive approach to avoid conflict. Dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
Role	Clear understanding of the role and its place within the organisation. Not duplicated or conflicted with others.
Support	Encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

Developing the Risk Assessment

Fundamental to any stress management approach is risk assessment, conducted to identify potential stressors (factors that can lead to stress, affecting an employee's ability to cope with work demands) and to highlight any measures already in place which might mitigate them. This 'organisational' level risk assessment has been produced to provide a general overview of work-related stressors and issues.

This risk assessment has been completed following the principles of the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) [Guidance for Managing Work Related Stress within the Higher Education Sector](#).

Key stakeholders were engaged in a phased approach in the development of this organisational stress risk assessment to utilise available expertise and to enable a more coordinated approach in its development. The approach was:

Initial development of risk assessment	Health Safety and Wellbeing Team, led by Assistant Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Senior Safety Manager and the Wellbeing Manager, who considered Occupational Health and sickness data.
Human Resources review	HR Executive team and University of Sussex Mental Health First Aider

	Instructor
Senior Leadership	Vice Chancellor and President, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost, Chief Operating Officer & University Secretary, Executive Director of Human Resource, Chief Financial Officer, Chief of Staff.
Staff Community	Shared with staff and Union Representatives in the Collective Consultation.

This risk assessment is a live document and under regular review, at least annually. An action plan will be developed to accompany the stress risk assessment, with ongoing reporting on progress presented at the University Risk Management Board, and University and Trades Unions Central Joint Negotiation Committee (CJN).