

# Findings of the Organisational Level Stress Risk Assessment

## Risk Areas Identified

The following table provides a summary of the risk ratings determined through the risk assessment process. Areas assessed (the [Management Standards](#)) are listed in order of the initial risk rating, with the revised risk rating (with additional measures implemented to manage work related stressors) in the final column.

Management Standard	Condition	Initial Risk Rating (with current measures)	Revised Risk Rating (with additional measures)
Change	How well organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated within the organisation.	12	9
Demands	Workload, work patterns and the work environment.	12	9
Role	Clear understanding of the role and its place within the organisation. Not duplicated or conflicted with others.	12	9
Control	Autonomy - how much say the person has in the way they do their work.	9	4
Organisational	Other organisational activities that are likely to cause an increase in work-related stress.	6	4
Relationships	Positive approach to avoid conflict. Dealing with unacceptable behaviour.	6	4
Support	Encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.	6	4

## Priorities

Following a risk-based approach, the three main areas of focus are on **CHANGE** and **DEMANDS** and **ROLE**. These areas align with the current context of the University in terms of financial challenges, national pressures on the Higher Education Sector, and University of Sussex specific activities relating to two Voluntary Leavers Schemes (2024 and in 2025) resulting in reduced staffing and the Collective Consultation impacting some individual, team and service roles.

## Summary of Findings and Actions

This section provides an overview of the findings from the organisational stress risk assessment, showing the current factors impacting work related stress, organisational measures in place to support staff wellbeing and mitigate stressors, and the actions required to reduce work related stress to an acceptable level.

For ease, factors, mitigations and actions related specifically to the Collective Consultation are shown in purple text.

The full risk assessment is available on request – please email [healthsafety@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:healthsafety@sussex.ac.uk)

<b>CHANGE - how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the university</b>			
<b>Activities likely to increase work-related stress</b>		<b>Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress</b>	
<p>Following VLS (2024 and 2025) staff numbers have reduced and some individual, team, and service roles have changed.</p> <p>The announcement of the Collective Consultation and related process (selection pools, scoring process and interviews) creates uncertainty for some staff.</p> <p>This organisational change can lead to issues such as insufficient or poorly timed communication about changes, limited employee engagement in the change process, few opportunities (real or perceived) for staff to influence decisions, inadequate support for employees during periods of transition, lack of clarity around new or altered roles, job descriptions that no longer align with actual responsibilities.</p>		<p>The organisation has several structures and resources in place to support effective communication and staff engagement during periods of change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers are expected to explain the purpose and necessity of changes to their teams, supported by the overarching Sussex 2035 Strategy, which sets out the university's long-term vision and direction.</li> <li>Line managers are available for regular informal 1:1 meetings with staff, as appropriate to individual circumstances, as well as ADR discussions, to provide space for staff to discuss the impact of change.</li> <li>Staff are encouraged to participate in the Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan (2025–28), including process-improvement work across professional services.</li> <li>University-wide updates are shared through multiple communication channels managed by the Internal Communications Team.</li> <li>Managers have access to an online toolkit containing guidance for leading change and a dedicated Change Toolkit.</li> <li>Additional resources exist to support staff wellbeing, including a Workplace Adjustment Toolkit to help managers implement reasonable adjustments where needed.</li> <li>See SUPPORT summary section for further details of staff support available.</li> </ul> <p>Specific measures for the Collective Consultation and related process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Change Documents (BCDs) shared with staff</li> <li>Regular communication and engagement with staff including <a href="#">VC Briefings</a></li> <li>Clear process communicated with FAQs and guidance readily available for effected staff</li> <li>Additional Union facilities time to support members</li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>		<b>12</b>	
<b>Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level</b>		<b>Role Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for completion</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a change process, managers and supervisors should provide clarity of expectation as appropriate, consider staff behaviour and provide relevant support (see the Support section.)</li> </ul>		Line Managers/ Supervisors	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers to ensure adequate communication and consultation mechanisms exist within their department/ function/ team.</li> </ul>		Directors and Executive Deans	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing staff engagement and communication on the progress of the Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>		VC/ Internal Comms Team	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing communications during the Collective Consultation</li> </ul>		VC/ Internal Comms Team	End of Collective Consultation period
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>		<b>9</b>	

<b>DEMANDS</b> - this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment		
<b>Activities likely to increase work-related stress</b>	<b>Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress</b>	
<p>Staffing reductions, organisational restructuring (following VLS 2024, VLS 2025 and the <a href="#">Collective Consultation</a>), and financial limitations are increasing workload pressures and changing work patterns across some teams. These changes, combined with reduced professional development opportunities and predictable seasonal workload peaks, are contributing to higher demands on some staff.</p> <p>As a result, some staff may experience feeling overworked with extended working hours, a faster pace of work, skill gaps, and fewer opportunities for connection.</p>	<p>Organisational measures are in place to support staff wellbeing and manage work-related stress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of Human Resources policies and process are in place such as carer support, disability leave, flexible working, and workplace adjustments to promote work-life balance.</li> <li>• Staff have contracted working hours and structured breaks providing a framework for working patterns and workload.</li> <li>• High-demand periods are planned in advance with appropriate staffing and welfare considerations.</li> <li>• Line managers are available for regular informal 1:1 meetings with staff, as appropriate to individual circumstances, as well as ADR discussions, to provide space for staff to raise workload, wellbeing, and development needs.</li> <li>• Leadership capability is strengthened through the Sussex Leader and Manager Competency Framework and a suite of training resources including psychological safety, change management and delegation.</li> <li>• Staff can contribute to process-improvement initiatives via the Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan.</li> <li>• Staff Networks and EDI Steering Groups offer additional channels for feedback and insight to inform organisational improvements.</li> </ul> <p>Specific measures for the <a href="#">Collective Consultation</a> and related process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Business Change Documents (BCDs)</a> shared with staff</li> <li>• <a href="#">Regular communication and engagement with staff including VC Briefings</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Clear process communicated with FAQs and guidance readily available for effected staff</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Additional Union facilities time to support members</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level</b>	<b>Role Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for completion</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement revised institution wide Stress Risk Assessment process.</li> </ul>	Executive Director of HR	Dec 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management to ensure all staff are aware of systems in place to encourage staff to talk to them at an early stage if they feel they are unable to cope with the demands of their role e.g. 121 meetings.</li> </ul>	PSLT/ Executive Deans	July 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular review of related Divisional/ Faculty level data (including but not limited to Occupational Health data, sickness absence data, feedback from staff networks and Trades Unions, staff survey, Report and Support data etc) to identify any areas of concern.</li> </ul>	PSLT and Executive Deans (data shared by HR)	TBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of online learning and resources available to improve conversations around mental health, emphasising job crafting and wellbeing, and meaningful ADR conversations.</li> </ul>	Executive Director of HR with Comms	Sep 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate and share ideas from staff following the <a href="#">Collective Consultation</a>, on mitigating measures to support workload management</li> </ul>	Executive Director of HR with Comms	Sep 2026
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>	<b>9</b>	

ROLE - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the University ensures that they do not have conflicting roles		
Activities likely to increase work-related stress	Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress	
<p>The University has undergone significant staffing and structural changes following VLS (2024 and 2025) with reduced staff numbers and changes to some individual, team, and service roles.</p> <p>The announcement of the <a href="#">Collective Consultation and related process</a> has created uncertainty for some staff.</p> <p>These changes can lead to unclear roles and responsibilities, staff lacking understanding of what is expected of them, a mismatch between actual duties and the expectations of colleagues or other teams, and perceived and/or actual impact on individuals' ability to undertake the role e.g. through inadequate training and induction.</p>	<p>The University has several measures in place to ensure staff understand their roles and to support effective management and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers and supervisors are responsible for clarifying expectations and are encouraged to make themselves available for regular informal 1:1 meetings to provide space for staff to raise issues related to role clarity. This may be supported by regular team meetings as appropriate to individual circumstances.</li> <li>Role consistency is reinforced through Job Descriptions aligned to the Job Families framework.</li> <li>Leadership capability is strengthened through the Sussex Leader and Manager Competency Framework, alongside a range of resources for new line managers, including guidance documents, onboarding support, and a dedicated development channel on Teams.</li> <li>Broader management development is provided through formal training, an online Managers Toolkit, and leadership programmes.</li> <li>Staff also have access to wider development opportunities such as the Staff Apprentice Scheme, mentoring, and job shadowing.</li> </ul> <p>Specific measures for the <a href="#">Collective Consultation and related process</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Change Documents (BCDs) shared with staff</li> <li>Regular communication and engagement with staff including <a href="#">VC Briefings</a></li> <li>Clear process communicated with FAQs and guidance readily available for effected staff</li> <li>Additional Union facilities time to support members</li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>	<b>12</b>	
Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level	Role Responsible	Timeline for completion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers and supervisors to ensure team meetings and 121s/ supervision continue.</li> </ul>	Line Managers/ Supervisors	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organograms of Teams/ Schools/ Divisions are up to date and shared with staff.</li> </ul>	Executive Deans/ Directors	Sep 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team/ School/ Service information on web pages to be reviewed to ensure roles/ team functions/ services are current.</li> </ul>	Executive Deans/ Directors	TBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following VLS 2025, ensure role profiles/job descriptions are aligned to new/ revised roles and individuals are clear on requirements/ expectations of the role.</li> </ul>	Line Managers	July 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular communications and opportunities for staff engagement including <a href="#">VC Briefings</a></li> </ul>	Communications Team	Ongoing
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>	<b>9</b>	

<b>CONTROL - how much say the person has in the way they do their work</b>			
<b>Activities likely to increase work-related stress</b>		<b>Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress</b>	
<p>Recent organisational changes have created uncertainty and shift in how some individuals and teams' work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VLS Schemes (2024 and 2025) introduced new ways of working for some individuals / teams, with varied levels of engagement and consultation on changes.</li> <li>• <b>The announcement of the Collective Consultation and related process has created uncertainty for some staff.</b></li> </ul> <p>There may be a perceived loss of control of an individual's role/ team role, and over key aspects of their work including pace and how the work is done, opportunities for skill development, participation in decision-making, work patterns and breaks.</p>		<p>Organisational measures are in place to support staff development, wellbeing and effective working practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Collective Consultation has a clear process, with supporting FAQs and guidance. Business Change Documents (BCDs) for each Faculty and Division are shared with staff and trades unions.</b></li> <li>• Line managers are available for regular informal 1:1 meetings with staff, as appropriate to individual circumstances, as well as ADR discussions, to provide space to enable reflection on progress, skills and future development needs.</li> <li>• The Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan (2025–28) sets priorities for student number recovery, income growth, reputation building and improved efficiency, providing a sense of assurance about the future of the university.</li> <li>• Flexible and hybrid working is supported through a remote-working framework and a suite of HR policies designed to promote work–life balance, including carer support, disability leave, flexible working procedures and workplace adjustment tools.</li> <li>• Staff have established routes to access management, HR and Occupational Health for guidance and support.</li> <li>• A dedicated change toolkit is available to help ensure consistent, well-managed organisational change and encourages early engagement with staff to support positive involvement and more sustainable outcomes.</li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>		<b>9</b>	
<b>Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level</b>		<b>Role Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for completion</b>
• Promote learning and development opportunities to the University community that do not attract additional cost.		Executive Director of HR and Internal Comms Team	Ongoing
• Attendance to learning and development opportunities encouraged by line managers and sufficient time provided for staff to attend.		Directors and Executive Deans	Ongoing
• Managers to ensure adequate communication and consultation mechanisms exist within their department/ function/ team to encourage staff participation in decision making.		Directors and Executive Deans	June 2026
• Ongoing staff engagement and communication on the progress of the Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan.		VC/ Internal Comms Team	Ongoing
• <b>Ongoing communications during the Collective Consultation</b>		<b>VC/ Internal Comms Team</b>	<b>End of Collective Consultation period</b>
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>		<b>4</b>	

<b>SUPPORT</b> - this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the University, line management and colleagues		
<b>Activities likely to increase work-related stress</b>	<b>Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress</b>	
<p>Recent changes to line managers, team structures and peer groups following the two VLS have affected how some staff access support.</p> <p>The Collective Consultation creates a need for specific support for staff impacted by the process.</p> <p>These shifts may create both perceived and actual reductions in available support, whether at organisational, Divisional, Faculty or local team level, influencing how consistently and effectively staff feel supported in their roles.</p> <p>These changes can lead to issues such as limited access to managers or colleagues, reduced access to 'self-service' resources for support, difficulties obtaining necessary tools/information/ resources for their role, reduced constructive feedback and less transparent communication.</p>	<p>A wide range of support measures are in place to promote staff wellbeing, development and inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New starters receive local Health and Safety inductions and role-specific training.</li> <li>• Line managers are encouraged to make themselves available for regular informal 1:1 meetings with staff as appropriate to individual circumstances, as well as timely ADR discussions to provide space for staff to raise workload, wellbeing, and development needs.</li> <li>• Staff are encouraged to discuss work-related stress or mental-health concerns with line managers.</li> <li>• Line Managers and supervisors must support staff returning to work following a period of absence.</li> <li>• Each School and Division has an EDI Champion, and Staff Networks offer opportunities for connection across the university.</li> <li>• Extensive learning and development resources are available, including training on mental health, wellbeing, remote working and mindfulness, as well as dedicated programmes for line managers on supporting staff.</li> <li>• Additional support includes mentoring, the Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health services, and a Staff Wellbeing Hub with clear support pathways.</li> <li>• Tools such as the Workplace Adjustment Toolkit, Wellness Action Plans and individual stress risk assessments help staff and managers identify needs, implement adjustments and manage stress proactively.</li> </ul> <p>Specific measures for the Collective Consultation and related process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Change Documents (BCDs) shared with staff</li> <li>• Regular communication and engagement with staff including <a href="#">VC Briefings</a></li> <li>• Clear process communicated with FAQs and guidance readily available for effected staff</li> <li>• Additional Union facilities time to support members</li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level</b>	<b>Role Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for completion</b>
• Promotion of wellbeing resources	Communications Team	Ongoing
• Implement revised institution wide Stress Risk Assessment process.	Executive Director of HR	Sep 2026
• Moderated and confidential support groups for staff provided by the Chaplaincy.	Chaplain	Ongoing
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>	<b>4</b>	

<b>RELATIONSHIPS - this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour</b>		
<b>Activities likely to increase work-related stress</b>	<b>Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress</b>	
<p>The two VLS has resulted in restructuring and changes to some teams, line management, team membership and peer groups.</p> <p>Some staff have had to process the departure of well-regarded colleagues and friends through these changes.</p> <p>Tensions may have arisen where previous VL applicants were unsuccessful while others were accepted.</p> <p>Potential for emotional strain (a mix of relief, sadness and concern for others) for staff not impacted by Collective Consultation.</p> <p>As a result, several issues can emerge, such as uncertainty about how to report concerns, difficulty sharing information with managers, and poor working relationships with line managers and/or peers.</p> <p>These challenges are intensified when there is a lack of system implemented to address unacceptable behaviour, disciplinary matters, or grievances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University has a range of policies, support structures and tools in place to promote dignity, respect and inclusion.</li> <li>• Managers and staff are expected to follow relevant policies, including those covering bullying, harassment, grievances and disciplinary matters.</li> <li>• Line managers are encouraged to make themselves available for regular informal 1:1 meetings with staff as appropriate to individual circumstances, as well as timely ADR discussions.</li> <li>• Support for resolving issues is available through the HR People Partnering Team and through EDI representatives embedded across Faculties and Divisions.</li> <li>• Managers have access to training and an online toolkit covering areas such as coaching, feedback, team engagement and handling difficult conversations.</li> <li>• Staff Networks provide opportunities for connection across the institution.</li> <li>• Concerns can be raised anonymously through the Report and Support tool, and additional mechanisms—such as Routes to Resolution and related resources—offer further ways to address culture-harming behaviours.</li> </ul> <p>Specific measures for the Collective Consultation and related process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Change Documents (BCDs) shared with staff</li> <li>• Regular communication and engagement with staff including <a href="#">VC Briefings</a></li> <li>• Clear process communicated with FAQs and guidance readily available for effected staff</li> <li>• Additional Union facilities time to support members</li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level</b>	<b>Role Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for completion</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager and Supervisor training promoted to focus on developing coaching and communication skills and to provide skills in creating and undertaking team building initiatives.</li> </ul>	Executive Director of HR	Jan 2027
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University wide and Faculty/ Division 'Community' events promoted to increase opportunities for staff to network.</li> </ul>	Executive Deans and Directors	Dec2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication of staff wellbeing support available with regular focus on resources related to Collective Consultation.</li> </ul>	Communication Team	Ongoing
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>	<b>4</b>	

<b>OTHER ORGANISATIONAL RISKS</b>		
<b>Activities likely to increase work-related stress</b>	<b>Current Measures in place to prevent increase in work-related stress</b>	
<p>The University is operating within a challenging national environment shaped by pressures on student recruitment, increasing regulatory scrutiny, and tightening funding across the higher education sector.</p> <p>These external factors are compounded by some of the ways of working of the Office for Students (OfS), and legal and regulatory changes that require significant institutional attention and adaptation.</p> <p>Collectively, these dynamics can create uncertainty for staff, especially where individuals feel they have limited ability (perceived or actual) to influence decisions or shape change during a period of instability.</p> <p>They may also cause concerns about job security and future career progression within both the University and the wider sector.</p>	<p>The University has established a structured approach to strengthening its position and delivering long-term goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan (2025–28) sets out four core priorities—restoring student numbers, increasing income, enhancing reputation, and improving efficiency and effectiveness, as the first phase of delivering Sussex 2035.</li> <li>• This work is supported by a robust Risk Management framework that identifies and mitigates organisational risks, alongside strong governance arrangements through the Audit and Risk Committee and Council.</li> <li>• Regular communication, including updates on engagement with the Office for Students, helps maintain transparency.</li> <li>• The University continues to involve key stakeholder groups, such as Staff Networks, and advances equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments through dedicated steering groups with stress risk assessment undertaken for specific groups of staff where need identified (e.g. supporting the staff Trans Non-Binary Network (TNB) following regulatory changes.)</li> </ul>	
<b>Initial Risk Rating</b>	9	
<b>Further action needed to reduce work-related stress risk to an acceptable level</b>	<b>Role Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline for completion</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication on progress against Sussex 2035 and the Recovery and Rebuilding Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>	Internal Comms Team	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular updates through VC Forums, Professional Service and Academic Forums.</li> </ul>	VC/ COO/ Provost	Ongoing (scheduled meetings)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VC engagement with national lobbying groups to promote Sussex interests.</li> </ul>	VC	Ongoing
<b>Revised Risk Rating</b>	6	