RESILIENCE & STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION & POLICY STATEMENT

University of Suffolk (UoS) is committed to protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff, through appropriate management of both physical and psychological hazards. We want our workforce to be resilient, healthy, and happy and on the occasions where resilience drops or stress increases, we aim to proactively and supportively address this – through positive and timely management practices and interventions and through collaborative actions as identified between individuals and their managers.

This policy outlines our aspiration to put wellbeing first – and to ensure that colleagues who (from time to time) may need extra support with their resilience or feelings of stress receive this.

It is important to live by our university values and behaviours to ensure we all play our part in providing the best environment for our colleagues for a positive experience at work where people can feel safe and supported.

University of Suffolk is committed to achieving a healthy workplace culture where:

- Good employment practices are in place which support good levels of resilience in our staff, and which reduce the likelihood of workplace stress and help staff achieve a positive work-life balance.
- Appropriate management training / proactive supervision is encouraged.
- Career development and planning is supported.
- Workplace stressors are identified and managed to reduce the risk of stress.
- Early signs of a change in resilience or an increase in stress in individuals are recognised and acted upon.
- Supportive measures are in place to minimise the harmful effects of stress.

- Professional support from Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme services are provided.
- Our core values and the expected professional behaviours are embedded in how we work.

2. DEFINITIONS

Resilience

Resilience is an individual's ability to recover from or stay well in the face of adversity. In a work setting, this translates in an employee having the capacity to thrive rather than just survive. Resilience helps employees adapt, cope, and respond positively to stressors in the workplace.

Organisational resilience looks at how well the organisation can 'weather the storm' or adapt to the challenges it faces (CIPD).

Stress

The Health & Safety Executive defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them." This definition makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive factor if managed correctly, and stress (when pressure becomes excessive) which can be detrimental to health.

We recognise that stress in the workplace needs the careful support and intervention of managers to collaborate with individuals to identify and to seek actions to reduce workplace stressors. This is important in creating a culture that is psychologically safe. We seek to support individuals who are affected by stress, (which is primarily caused by feeling under pressure, worry, big changes, lack of control in situations, and having responsibilities that are overwhelming). It is recognised that these factors can derive from both inside and outside of the work environment.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Organisational

The Vice-Chancellor and members of the Executive Team are overall responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and managed effectively alongside the Senior Leadership Team.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee is responsible for reviewing the implementation of this policy.

Line Managers

All managers are responsible for promoting a positive workplace culture which:

- Identifies, assesses, and manages the causes and effects of workplace stress e.g., work demands (too high / too low), bullying or harassment.
- Supports and addresses work-life balance issues.
- Ensures staff are effectively supported, and that staff understand their individual responsibilities and act on them.
- Leads by example, providing a sound role model for others in managing their work-life balance.
- Recognises that their personal management style can influence wellbeing /performance.
- Ensures their staff understand the university values and behaviours and display them through their approach to work.

A line manager's behaviour and the culture they create in their teams is the biggest influence on an employee's work experience. Guidance on building resilience in teams can be found in section 5 – Understanding and Supporting Resilience below.

People & Organisational Development (POD)
People and Organisational Development Directorate are responsible for the delivery of our People strategy which includes our aspirations for a wellbeing culture which is genuine, compassionate, responsive, and versatile. The Directorate encourages a proactive, supportive and partnership approach to ensure people are safe, supported, and healthy both physically and mentally. POD are available to provide advice and guidance to managers to support the delivery of this policy e.g., best practice in assisting employees in taking practical steps to reduce the risk of stress, support the wellbeing of our people and use this policy effectively and appropriately.

Individuals
All staff are responsible for taking reasonable care for their own health, safety, and wellbeing and that of their colleagues; adhere to University of Suffolk policies and procedures; planning their own workload (so far as is possible); communicating concerns to their manager so that support can be planned; co-operating with advice and guidance that may be offered. In addition, we all have a role to play in supporting each other, which may involve drawing any concerns to the attention of an appropriate manager.

4. SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

Staff (and members of their immediate families living with them) have access to an Employee Assistance Programme where they can access a confidential, 24/7 counselling service including onward referral where appropriate. As part of this provision, a wellbeing portal and app can be accessed by employees for support and guidance. Details of the service can be found on My Suffolk.

University of Suffolk has available the services of an Occupational Health service to provide appropriate advice and guidance about the health and wellbeing of staff. Line Managers or individuals may request for a referral to be made to Occupational Health to support their health / wellbeing (or in the case of absence, to support a timely and supported return to work). The People Business Partner will be able to support the referral process, where required. Occupational Health or the People Business Partner may additionally offer signposts to other relevant services.

UoS is committed to supporting staff seeking to return to work after a significant period of absence (typically a two-month period). To this end, and subject to the recommendations of the Occupational Health Advisor, a phased return may be agreed, such that the staff member gradually increases their attendance at work over an agreed period up to a maximum of four weeks to support their recovery and facilitate a planned and supported return to full work duties / responsibilities. More information around phased return following prolonged absence can be found in the Sickness Absence Policy.

Where work related stress is a factor, undertaking a ‘Support Assessment - Work Related Stress’ is recommended. This assessment is a supportive measure prompting consideration of each of HSE Management Standards aiding the identification of the main risk factors for stress / areas for focus and the measures which can be taken to control and / or reduce the risk of stress moving forward. Further details regarding this process are available via the link provided above.

5. UNDERSTANDING OF AND SUPPORT FOR RESILIENCE

Line managers play a vital role in supporting resilience of their staff. Building and sustaining good working relationships with each member of their team, with an underlying attitude of care, compassion and kindness is

key to enhancing employee resilience. Other aspects of management style are also important for enhancing resilience, for example, setting motivating goals, celebrating success, coaching team members, creating supportive work environments, communicating, and managing work, resources, and people management issues effectively, such as conflict, sickness absence to avoid negative impact. CIPD Research identifies the following five behavioural areas as important for managers to support their staff to build individual and team resilience.

i) **Being open, fair, and consistent** – *being positive and appreciative will help people with confidence and optimism.*
ii) **Handling conflict and people management issues** – *preventing interpersonal conflict from getting in the way of colleagues providing support for each other.*
iii) **Providing knowledge, clarity, and guidance** – *develops understanding and ensures that people know what to suspect, feel that their work is manageable and access the resources they need.*
iv) **Building and sustaining relationships** – *key to building resilience. Supportive, caring relationships built on respect, compassion and kindness reduce stress and help people to thrive.*
v) **Supporting development** – *builds confidence, purpose, and provides access to resources.*

Interventions at group, leadership and institutional level also help build resilience in employees by creating the conditions in which individuals are enabled to be resilient, such as leadership development programmes; job design; strategies affecting culture change and business continuity. For further examples of supporting practice, view Appendix 1 – Supporting Practice.

6. UNDERSTANDING, IDENTIFICATION, MANAGEMENT & PREVENTION OF STRESS

Causes of Stress

We all experience a certain amount of pressure in our daily lives, and this can be a positive contributor to our general health and wellbeing. However, too much pressure or a feeling of losing control in our personal and/or working lives can lead to feelings of stress.

The main causes of work-related stress at work are:

- Conflicting or excessive demands
- Lack of control over the way work is done
- Lack of support from manager(s) and colleagues
- Problems with work relationships (e.g., bullying)
- Lack of clarity about the job role
- Lack of engagement in change

It is worth noting that stress might also be the result of the sheer volume of pressures, rather than a single major event, none of which would be particularly troublesome alone, but taken as a whole, the employee may not be able to cope with them all.

Of course, there are causes of stress unrelated to work (such as bereavement, break down in a relationship, financial problems). External stressors can make it more difficult to cope with pressures at work which might usually be manageable and not cause concern.

The Health & Safety Executive has identified six management standards which, if properly managed, can reduce work related stress. These standards are defined at Appendix 2.

Signs of Stress

People's reactions to stressful situations vary. Reactions may be behavioural or emotional. Some of the more common warning signs are:

- Critical and negative
- Humourless
- Indecisive
- Irritable and aggressive
- Withdrawn and moody
- Sleep disorders
- Rapid mood changes
- Panic attacks
- Low self-esteem and self confidence
- Eating, drinking, and smoking more
- Increased emotional reactions (tearful/sensitive/aggressive)
- Uncharacteristic errors

Most of us encounter stressful experiences from time to time; short-term, the effects of stress are unlikely to cause great harm. However, prolonged exposure to the effects of stress can bring more lasting damage to our physical and mental health, our psychological wellbeing, and to our relationships at home and at work.

Prevention of Stress

Psychological safety describes an environment where people feel able to express themselves without fear that others will think less of them and is strongly associated with role clarity and peer support both of which feature in the HSE Standards. Providing such an environment encourages people to be creative and speak up with new ideas and concepts without fear of persecution, ridicule, or retaliation. If employees feel accepted and respected, then their psychological safety will increase alongside resilience and reducing stress at work.

UoS has in place several policies, procedures and initiatives which may eliminate or support the reduction of the likelihood of work-related stress, increase psychological safety and improve resilience. These include an Employee Assistance Programme Service, Employee voice through our Staff Survey process, Values and Behaviours Framework promoting positive indicators to drive the ethos of the organisation - the way and how we work here, and continuously developing our work experience. Further details can be found in Appendix 1.

Identification & Management of Stress

Managers are responsible for reviewing their quarterly reports of sickness absence and turnover which are available on the Management Information Dashboard. This data is reported (inter alia) to the university's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and can provide an indicator of emerging stress hotspots. Similarly, responses to key questions in the annual Staff Survey may also highlight where we are supporting wellbeing and any areas for attention. In these circumstances, the POD Directorate can provide guidance and advice to support the relevant manager(s) to identify the causes and to develop an appropriate action plan through the support assessment process (Section 4 above refers). Sometimes, it may be helpful and appropriate to bring together a focus group of employees to explore a particular issue and seek potential solutions.

Where stress appears to be affecting an employee's performance, the employee and their manager should complete a stress support assessment and develop an action plan. The Support Assessment – Work Related Stress can be found via the link provided alongside the policy on the intranet. In the event of relationship difficulties between the line manager and employee, POD will be able to provide advice and guidance on

options available to ensure these difficulties are discussed fully and a plan of action is developed. The involvement of another impartial manager or POD Business partner in exceptional circumstances may assist the support assessment and action planning process. In addition, and exceptionally, meditation may be an appropriate route to re-establish a good working relationship.

7. FURTHER GUIDANCE

For Staff:
If you think you or a colleague may be experiencing the effects of stress, we recommend you follow these steps:

- Check in with your colleague to see how they are.
- Raise your concerns about any work-related stress that you may be experiencing with your line manager. Alternatively, approach your trade union representative and/or ask POD for advice and help.
- Talk to your line manager and/or POD in confidence about any other stressors which you feel are / or may affect your ability to conduct your role to the level normally required.
- If stress is work related complete the Support Assessment - Work Related Stress arrange a meeting to discuss this with your line manager (or exceptionally another trusted manager) and agree an action plan of support.
- Accept opportunities for training, counselling or other help when offered or recommended.
- Take stock of your workload and work practice – there may be steps you can take to improve things.
- Contact our confidential Employee Assistance Programme on 0800 028 0199 or on the My Healthy Advantage app for online chat. Qualified counsellors and legal advisors are available 24/7.

For Managers:
If you believe a member of your staff is showing signs of an adverse reaction to stress, we recommend you follow these steps:

- Read this policy carefully.
- Take time to speak to your staff member about your observations; ensure you have time and privacy for this conversation to establish any support arrangements required.
- If work-related factors have been identified complete the stress risk assessment with the staff member and then arrange a meeting with the staff member to discuss and agree an action plan of support; this is particularly important when a staff member returns to work after an absence that is stress related.
- If the problem is personal rather than work-related, consider any actions you could take to support the individual and improve the situation (e.g., short-term changes in work patterns, support through EAP Service).
- Make a note of any actions you agree and make sure you follow these through.
- Seek advice and guidance from your People Business Partner, if required.
- Arrange regular meetings review the assessment and any actions you have agreed.
- Management support regarding the EAP service can be found via the link provided.

8. QUICK LINKS

Health and Wellbeing Toolkit

Support Assessment – Work Related Stress

Further links to other key resources are available in Appendix 1 – Supporting Practice

Appendix 1 – Supportive Practice

University of Suffolk has in place several policies, procedures and initiatives which may serve to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of work-related stress and increase psychological safety and resilience. Information on the below can be found on Hub:

Agile Working	The ability to choose time and place for key work activities. Within our Agile framework it is vital that a connection between colleague and campus is regularly maintained. Your line manager will discuss the 'shades of agility' which can be afforded in your role or department. It should be recognised that not all roles will be able to be agile because of the nature of the work, the level of supervision required in the role or the need to be present and accessible to other colleagues and/or students for most of the time. Staff who fall into this category are defined as campus workers.
Annual Leave	UoS provides a generous annual leave entitlement and staff are encouraged to take their leave at regular intervals to ensure appropriate rest, and to maintain good health and wellbeing.
Appraisal	The process of reviewing and setting individual objectives, linked to business plans and our values and behaviours framework. An opportunity to discuss career aspirations and development. This review gives staff and their managers quality time in which to reflect on how things are going and areas for development. The process is qualitative as well as quantitative. In addition, it is expected that managers/supervisors will have regular one to one meeting with their staff.
Business Continuity	Each School / Directorate is responsible for maintaining its own Business Continuity plan which will be used to work through any disruption to 'business as usual' and guides staff on the procedure to follow.
Dignity and Respect at Work	A framework for creating a work environment free of harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect**.**
Disability Leave	Staff with disabilities may take up to 10 days' paid leave each year in place of uncertified sickness absence.
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	A confidential employee resource designed to help employees deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their home life or work life, health, and general wellbeing
Family Friendly Policies	A range of policies addressing the needs of expectant mothers, new parents (including those who adopt) and those with older children, as well as carers of disabled and/or elderly dependants.
Flexi Time Scheme	Available to eligible business support posts grade 1-6.
Flexible Working Policy	This policy is available to all staff and gives the opportunity for requests to be made to adjust their working pattern / arrangements to suit their individual needs and responsibilities
Grievance Procedures	A framework for staff complaints.

Health and Wellbeing Toolkit	The toolkit aims to provide the University community with the information, tools, and opportunities available to support our self-care and importantly details where to access guided and enhanced support at the University or externally, when we need it.
Job Design	Job descriptions should be kept up to date to reflect the demands of the role and therefore recognises what is required from the job holder, alongside a risk management approach to look at factors that can cause work-related stress, reviewing any critical incidents which might have occurred.
Management Development and Corporate Development Opportunities	A range of training and development interventions aimed at providing managers and staff with the necessary skills and competence for their roles.
Staff Intranet	Site provides an up-to-date source of news, events and information for all staff including a Health and Wellbeing toolkit.
Occupational Health Service	Occupational Health (OH) is concerned with the effect of work on health and vice versa.
Organisational Change Policy	This sets out how the university will manage changes to organisational structure, including arrangements for consultation and communication.
Staff Survey	This process enables our people to have a voice and provide honest feedback about their experience of working at the university in a confidential way. Collated feedback across the organisation provides an opportunity for wide-spread action in building on our strengths and effecting meaningful and positive change for individuals, teams, and the wider university community. Staff Survey – Enhancing our Work Experience SharePoint Site – view for the latest news on the staff survey process.
Values and Behaviours Framework	The guiding principles to our approach to work and ethos of the University
Wellness Interventions	From time to time, the University of Suffolk will sponsor or promote events / information designed to promote a healthier lifestyle.
University of Suffolk employment policies are available on Hub.	

Appendix 2

The HSE Management Standards

The Management Standards consider a set of six conditions that combine to achieve high levels of health, wellbeing, and organisational performance. Staff members may experience pressure if one or a number of the six conditions are not positively realised.

Demands; Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they can cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The Organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work.
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands.
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Control: How much say the person has in the way they do their work

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they can have a say about the way they do their work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work.
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work.
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work.
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills.
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

Support: Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees.

- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff.
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues.
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it.
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Relationship: Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g., bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness.
- Employees share information relevant to their work.
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour.
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

Role: Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible.
- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities.
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

Change How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals.
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs.
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes.
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

Further information about the HSE management standards can be found at www.hse.gov.uk**.**

Examples of how to meet each standard is available in the HSE Stress Workbook