

OCDEM, Churchill Hospital, Oxford OX3 7LE

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Work-related stress

There is a difference between **stress** and **pressure**. We all experience pressure on a daily basis, and need it to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best. It is when we experience too much pressure without the opportunity to recover that we start to experience stress. The University adopts the definition of stress used by Health and Safety Executive (HSE), namely "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them", and which draws a clear distinction between pressure, which can be a motivating factor, and stress, which can occur when pressure becomes excessive.

Work-related stress can be tackled by working with your supervisor to identify issues at source and agreeing realistic and workable ways to tackle these.

Employee Responsibilities

It is essential that staff play an active role in contributing to their own well-being and development, as well as to the success of the department and University, by using the resources available to carry out their role effectively. In order to minimise the risk of work-related stress, staff should:

- ensure good communication with colleagues and their line manager;
- support colleagues by providing appropriate information and by sharing knowledge and resources where appropriate;
- engage in discussion about their performance and act on feedback;
- raise issues of concern at an early stage and seek constructive solutions;
- make use of the support and training resources available, such as the resources outlined on the [Occupational Health website](#);
- ensure that harassment and bullying are not tolerated;
- seek appropriate advice and support at an early stage if difficulties arise.

It is hoped that a proactive approach will mitigate the occurrence of potentially harmful levels of stress. However, where a member of staff feels under undue pressure, he or she should alert their line manager, or another appropriate person (examples of appropriate people include the [Occupational Health Service](#) clinical staff, a departmental [harassment advisor](#), a

staff representative, or a colleague who may be able to speak on his or her behalf), or otherwise to seek assistance as soon as possible. See: [Guidance for staff](#).

What should I do if I'm becoming stressed?

Try to identify the causes and what you can do to make things better. Ideally, tell your supervisor at an early stage. If your stress is work related, this will give them the chance to help and prevent the situation getting worse, while even if it isn't work-related, they may be able to do something to reduce some of your pressure.

If the source of pressure is your line manager, talk to the Deputy Departmental Administrator, (Charlotte Kelly) or Departmental Administrator (Lynne Scott)

Many employees are reluctant to talk about stress at work, due to the stigma attached to it. They fear they will be seen as weak. But stress is not a weakness, and can happen to anyone. Remember: no employer should subject their employees to work-related stress, and this is an issue both you and employer should take seriously.

Support, resources and courses

Training courses to help you deal with stress before it becomes a serious problem are available from the Oxford Learning Institute, see link below:

<http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/seminars.php?page=19&cat=cc&ls=all>

Some examples of courses are:

Stress: developing resilience and handling pressure

Understanding and managing stress

Mindfulness for health and well-being

Emotions and resilience at work

Dealing with Harassment – online <http://www.rdm.ox.ac.uk/harassment-and-bullying-3>

Time Management

Helplines, podcasts, and further websites can be found at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs/at-work/mental-health/stress/supportresourcesandcourses/>

For further detailed information on stress please visit:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs/at-work/mental-health/stress/>

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/stress/policy/>

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Version	Date	Reason for update	Updated/reviewed by :	Date next review due
1	April 2007	New SOP	Author: SMH	April 2009
2	25 August 2016	Header and Head of Department, major rewrite, text and links updated	Charlotte Kelly	August 2018