

Work related Stress Risk Assessment Form

Unit : College of Life Sciences	Individual/Group : Laboratory managers	Name of assessor :
Activity : Research support	Unique role :	Signed:
Date of assessment :	Date Staff informed:	Date for formal review:

Stress is a natural reaction when actual or perceived demands exceed an individual's ability to cope at anytime. Symptoms of stress can be experienced in physical and/or psychological effects.

A College of Life Sciences [CLS] assessment of potential/actual causes of work related stress within the lab managers' activities, and measures/actions for control or resolution.

Type of Stressor: Control					
<i>How much say a person has in the way they do their work. Stress may occur if there is: (1) insufficient control over how or when tasks are done; (2) little participation in decision making; (3) highly prescriptive work regimes.</i>					
Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Insufficient control over how or when tasks are done, little participation in decision making, prescriptive work regimes. Lab managers provide administrative and technical support to research divisions within the College. Each division comprises a Head of Division, and several PIs, all of whom have equal demand on the manager's time. There are also demands from post-docs and post-grads within the divisions. Prioritising these demands is therefore a significant stressor. Lab managers have routine tasks that must be carried out on a	Lab managers	A review scheme for support staff was initiated in 2004 and all lab managers have participated in this. Where potentially helpful training was identified, managers have been encouraged, with the help of their reviewer, to follow this up. Relevant management courses are available through Staff Development (e.g. time management, feedback skills, project planning, teamwork) and lab managers have attended many of these. The lab managers group meets on a regular basis and problems of this type can be aired and discussed in that forum. The group continually reviews processes to reduce duplication and improve efficiency.	M/H	The College will continue to encourage training in all aspects of lab management. The nature of the work will not change, but the College aims to assist the managers in learning to deal with it, both by training in practical methods, such as time management, and by training in interpersonal skills such as assertiveness. PIs should be aware of this situation and should encourage their researchers to plan ahead and to consider the work-load of the manager when making demands on their time.	Head of College, PIs, College Secretary, Senior Lab Manager, Lab managers

regular basis (e.g. ordering, dealing with deliveries and invoices, health and safety duties) and finding time to do these when other, often urgent, demands are constantly being made, is a significant problem.					
<p>Type of Stressor: Demands <i>Stress may be caused by difficult environmental conditions, workload, work patterns, monotonous work, physically tiring work, work or responsibilities beyond the individual's skills, capacity or capability, high work intensity or pressure to achieve, having too much to do in too little time, too little/too much training for the job, boring or repetitive work or too little to do.</i></p>					
Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Work cannot be completed within normal hours. As lab managers do not carry out research projects, they should not need to work outwith normal hours on a regular basis. However, the volume of work can mean that they work beyond their contracted hours	Lab managers	Lab managers are not expected to work beyond their contracted hours and are encouraged to inform their line manager if duties cannot be completed within these hours. They are encouraged to take proper breaks, including at least 30 mins at lunch time. They are encouraged to attend relevant Staff Development courses which may prove helpful.	M	PIs should be aware of the hours that their lab manager works and assist them by not making unreasonable demands and ensuring that their research staff also consider the lab manager's work load. They will encourage their manager to take proper holidays and breaks as provided for in their terms and conditions of service. Lab managers should speak to PIs or the Head of Division if they are finding it necessary to work extra hours on a regular basis.	HODs, PIs, lab manager, Senior Lab Manager, College Secretary
Unsuitable work environment. Most managers work in areas which are busy and some can be hot and/or noisy. Many work where there is no natural light. Laboratory work is sometimes hazardous and this may be the cause of stress to some staff. Lab managers are designated as General Health & Safety Advisers in their area, and as such, are often the first point of contact for H & S issues.	Lab managers, all who work in area	Heat and noise are controlled as much as possible – some equipment is unavoidably noisy and PPE is supplied where necessary. Daylight tubes are being introduced, particularly where no natural light is available. Risk assessments are carried out and acted on and lab managers would normally have input into this process. They are encouraged to attend relevant training run by Safety Services and there is also in-house training. The College has a Health and Safety policy with a clearly defined reporting structure, so lab	L	Prompt action is taken on any reported problems. If there is an issue relating to the work environment, which the manager or PI cannot deal with locally, it will be reported to Estates, the H & S Co-ordinator or the College Secretary as appropriate.	Lab Manager, PIs, Estates, College Secretary

		managers know where to obtain information and assistance where necessary.			
Lab managers generally operate an “open-door” policy which means that they are interrupted frequently. This means that tasks that require concentration and attention to detail are difficult to do, and mistakes can be made.	Lab managers	Lab managers are encouraged to attend a Time Management course where ways of dealing with this, such as “red time”, are introduced	M	Lab managers will make every effort to set aside time each day or week, when they are unavailable, except in a genuine emergency. This time will be made known to all in their group, and other group members will be asked not to disturb the manager at this time. HODs and PIs need to back this arrangement.	HOD, PIs, lab manager
Lab managers are qualified science lab technicians and as such, are trained and experienced in lab work. However, some of their duties involve H & S basic training of new recruits and other H & S duties, which may be a new field to them. Inspections are carried out by enforcing authorities such as SEPA, and failure to satisfy the inspectors could have serious consequences. Any problems such as mess or poor record keeping is often caused by research workers, but the lab manager feels responsible for this, even though they have little control over it. New tasks such as Risk Assessment tend to be introduced via the lab manager.	Lab managers	There is a Senior Lab Manager who ensures that managers receive training by work shadowing and in a more formal way as appropriate. Areas where training is required are highlighted at review, and new tasks are introduced to the lab managers at their regular monthly meetings. Training needs are continually assessed in an informal way either at the monthly meetings or in conversations between lab managers and senior lab manager.	L	The review process and follow-up to it will continue. Lab managers will inform the Senior Lab Manager of any areas where they do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to carry out their job. PIs and senior post docs need to impress upon less experienced researchers, the need to work in a tidy and safe way and to keep the necessary records.	PIs, post-docs, Lab managers, Senior Lab Manager, College Secretary
As lab technicians, lab managers are not formally trained in administration and can find this stressful. Most are responsible for monitoring expenditure on the research grants in their group and have to handle budgets etc. Failure to monitor expenditure can result in overspends or in forfeiting funds. They prepare orders for equipment and consumables and need to deal with sales staff and to work within the	Lab manager, PI	PIs are responsible for their research funds and many look at the monthly financial reports that are produced by the College Finance Office. However, many PIs delegate the checking of these reports to the lab manager. There is no formal training for this, but methods of doing this and monitoring expenditure are passed on from manager to manager	L/M	PIs should speak to lab managers at the beginning of each grant to explain the finances e.g. length of grant, equipment purchases specified, budgets, need to ensure that budgets are spent etc. PIs to work with lab manager to check that grant expenditure is progressing properly. Lab managers to ensure that they obtain this information from the PIs and should liaise with them and with the College Finance Office on a regular basis	PIs, lab managers, College Finance Office

purchasing regulations.					
<p>Type of Stressor: Support <i>The encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues. Stress may be due to inadequate training, isolation from others, remote management, pressure from covering for absence, lack of support from management and coworkers, not being able to balance the demands of work and life outside work.</i></p>					
Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Inadequate training	Lab manager	This has been dealt with under the previous heading. The review scheme encourages staff and management to identify areas where training may be beneficial. The College has a training budget and staff are encouraged to submit requests for training	L	The College will continue to encourage all staff to attend appropriate training courses. In-house training is also offered on many relevant topics.	Lab managers, Senior Lab Manager, College Secretary
Remote management, lack of support from management or co-workers	Lab managers	The lab managers work as a team and the Senior Lab Manager ensures that cover is arranged if a manager is absent for any reason. The monthly meetings of this group provide a place where issues are discussed. Although PIs are often away on business, managers have daily contact with the researchers in their labs. The Senior Lab Manager and the College Secretary are always available for consultation and assistance.	L	If lab managers have a problem with this issue, they should consult the PIs, Senior Lab Manager or the College Secretary	Lab managers, PIs, Senior Lab Manager, College Secretary
Unable to balance life at work and outside work	Lab managers	The University has family friendly policies and seeks to help people with this issue if this can be done while meeting the organisational needs of the College. The HR Officer holds clinics on-site and can provide advice and/or direct staff to other sources of support throughout the University. Posters giving details of well-being contacts are displayed throughout the College.	L/M	Line managers should be sensitive to how their staff are coping and be willing to help at an early stage, either informally or by suggesting that staff contact the relevant person in the University. Individual staff members should approach their line manager or the HR Officer before the problem becomes an emergency.	Lab managers, Senior Lab Manager, College Secretary, HR Officer

Type of Stressor: Relationships

Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Stressors may originate from bullying, harassment and conflict, perceived inequitable treatment, poor management control of workplace behaviour, certain management / supervisory styles, or poor relationships with colleagues.

Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Bullying, harassment, conflict	Lab managers	The University has policies covering all these issues. The HR Officer and the Counselling Service are available for consultation. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated in the College or University	L	Staff will be reminded at intervals that these policies exist and should be used if required. Management to be on the lookout for such behaviour and to deal with it promptly at a local level. Staff should report such incidents at an early stage.	College Secretary, HR Officer, Lab managers
Poor management control of workplace behaviour, management/supervisory styles, poor relationships with colleagues	Lab Managers	Staff can approach their line manager about this and they will take it further if it cannot be dealt with locally. If the lab manager is the perceived problem, the College Secretary or HR Officer can be approached.	L	The College will continue to monitor behaviour of all the staff, recognising good practice and dealing with inappropriate behaviour using the University procedures.	Head of College, Line managers, HR Officer

Type of Stressor: Role

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles. Stress may be caused by role conflict, unclear objectives, conflict of demands or additional duties. Staff may feel that their job requires them to behave in conflicting ways at the same time. There may be confusion about how everyone fits in.

Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Understanding role in organisation, conflicting demands and additional duties. Lab managers are generally the first point of contact regarding the practicalities of the running of the labs. They are also the first point of contact when problems arise with equipment, supplies, Health and Safety issues, invoices etc. New working practices tend to be introduced via the lab managers. Often several of these things occur at the one time and one of the main	Lab managers	As stated above, the lab managers work as a team and meet regularly. All these issues are aired at these meetings and lab managers have a clear job description and understanding of their duties and responsibilities.. The Senior Lab Manager tries, where possible, to provide help when one lab manager is excessively busy. Training in Time Management, Assertiveness, Project Planning and other relevant topics is available through Staff Development. The H & S Management Group has recognized the	L/M	PIs to be aware of the work load of their lab manager and be willing to assist in prioritising work when necessary.	PIs, College Secretary, Senior Lab Manager, Lab managers

stressors for a lab manager is dealing with these situations on a daily basis.		necessity for lab managers to be allowed adequate time to carry out their H & S duties.			
Because the role of a lab manager is so varied, they have little chance to excel in any one area. They carry out some skilled and demanding tasks (e.g. procurement, H & S duties), but also have many menial tasks, often involving clearing up after others. Also, lab managers often communicate with the group via emails, with notices and verbally, about issues such as care of equipment, cleanliness of labs etc and often receive no feedback and little evidence of co-operation. This can be demoralising.	Lab managers	Untidiness in a lab environment is a health and safety issue, and the College endeavours to comply with all H & S regulations. The College H & S Management Committee has acknowledged the need for lab managers to have time to deal with H & S issues, but only PIs can really set and enforce standards of cleanliness etc in their labs. Lab managers encourage research staff to adhere to Good Laboratory Practice.	L/M	PIs need to support their lab manager in insisting on good laboratory practice and consideration of others within their group. This would free up some time for the lab manager to develop the more interesting areas of their work and would lead to greater enjoyment and job satisfaction.	PIs, all research workers

Type of Stressor: Change

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation. When an organisation is planning major change, staff are likely to be discussing job security, whether they will need to relocate, and whether their work environment or terms and conditions will change. These are all potential sources of stress.

Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
As the College of Life Sciences has developed in the last 5 years, relocations of research groups have been and still are necessary. Lab managers have a central role in arranging these moves and in ensuring that research work is interrupted for the minimum time. The personnel in the labs are always changing as PIs and other research workers come and go. Lab managers are, therefore, often faced with new demands.	All staff	Proposed relocations are known about well in advance and staff encouraged to plan them well in advance. Every effort is made to keep staff informed and minimise disruption. Additional help is arranged both from internal staff and from outside bodies such as Estates and Buildings, removal firms etc.	M	PIs and senior management to keep staff informed of proposed changes and relocations and discuss the detailed plans with their lab manager.	Head of College, College Secretary, Lab managers