

Work related Stress Risk Assessment Form

Unit : College of Life Sciences	Individual/Group : Post-doctoral researchers	Name of assessor :
Activity : Scientific research	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 post-doctoral research staff 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.	Post-docs	Post-docs are employed either on personal fellowships or on grants awarded to PIs by external bodies, in response to applications for funds for a specific line of research. Within the bounds of the fellowship or grant award, and after discussion with the PI, where applicable, they arrange their own work and make their own decisions.	L	Heads of Division and PIs will continue to support post docs and will be available to discuss work plans as required.	PIs, post-docs, HODs
A line of research may lead to a requirement for a piece of equipment or a facility that is not available within the	Post-docs	There is already a culture within the College whereby research groups are encouraged, where usage allows, to use equipment that is	L	The College will continue to encourage collaboration between research use and part of this collaboration involves equipment and	PIs, Dean of School of Research, Head

research group. This may result in a promising line of research having to be delayed or even abandoned		available in other research groups. If there is a need for facilities that are not available, this is addressed by PIs in discussion with colleagues within and outwith the College		facilities being available to other groups wherever practically possible. The College will continue to address any identified gaps in equipment and facilities.	of College
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Type of Stressor: Demands

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.

Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Work cannot be completed within normal hours. The nature of research in life sciences requires that post-docs frequently work outwith normal working hours. The lack of fixed hours can be a cause of stress, particularly to new post-docs who may feel pressure to work very long hours.	Post-docs	Although often working outwith normal hours, post-docs are able, as work allows, to have time off during normal hours. Staff Development runs courses which may be helpful e.g, Time Management	L/M	PIs to be aware of the hours that their post-docs work and give guidance if they feel the hours worked are too long, giving consideration to their health and welfare. Post-docs to take, and PIs to support them taking proper holidays and breaks as provided for in their terms and conditions of service.	PIs, post-docs
Unsuitable work environment. Laboratory work is sometimes hazardous (dangerous chemicals, radioactivity etc) and this may be the cause of stress to some staff. Also, some work is carried out in places that, of necessity, can be hot, noisy, cramped or smelly.	Post-docs	Risk assessments are carried out and acted on. Training in health and safety is given to all staff - basic training is given on day one and further training given at induction courses which are held regularly. Training in specific techniques is arranged as required. The College has a Health and Safety Policy which includes clear lines of responsibility and lists key H & S staff. The policy is issued to all new-starts.	L	Prompt action on any reported problems with heating, ventilation etc. Post-docs to notify the lab manager of any problems or if they are unsure about anything relating to their work environment.	Post-docs, lab managers, Estates, PIs
Scientific research is a highly competitive field and there is great pressure to achieve. Failed experiments or delays are a source of stress. Funding bodies look for returns for their investment in the form of published papers, scientific advances and possible commercial spin-offs. The future	Post docs	Post-docs are encouraged to attend and to present papers at relevant scientific meetings. There are regular in-house seminars and research groups hold regular meetings at which researchers present their data and there is input from other members of the group.	M	PIs to ensure that their post-docs are progressing and take action early if there is a problem. Post-docs to communicate problems to their PI	Post-docs, PIs

employment of a post-doc is dependent on progress and success.					
Post-docs are often on fixed, short-term contracts and consequently, towards the end of these contracts there is a demand either to find more funding to support them here or to find employment elsewhere	Post-docs	Post-docs are encouraged to attend conferences, present and publish papers and generally make themselves known in the scientific community. This enables them to make contacts in their field and to make the next step in their careers. A Post-doc Association has been set up recently within the College. This provides a forum for speakers and for discussion aimed at helping post-docs with career development. The University Careers Service is also available.	MH	PIs to continue to encourage post-docs in their group to attend conferences and to become involved in the new Association. Post-docs to take full advantage of these opportunities. PIs to support post-docs in obtaining generic skills that are beneficial to their present post and will also assist them in obtaining a new post when their contract comes to an end.	PIs, post-docs

Type of Stressor: Support

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.

Stressor	Who is Affected?	Control measures	Risk	Further Action	Persons Responsible
Isolation from others	Post-doc	Most post-docs work in busy laboratories where they are in daily contact with other researchers and lab staff. A post-doc association has recently been set up and all post-docs are encouraged to attend. The annual residential College symposium and the seminar programme provide opportunities to interact with researchers from other groups, as do coffee rooms and the cafeteria.	L	Through the new association, post-docs will develop contacts across research groups. PIs to encourage interaction with other research groups and avoid their post docs becoming isolated.	Post-docs, PIs
Remote management. Many PIs travel extensively and are involved in outside activities/bodies which necessitate their being out of the labs for a significant percentage of the time. This can result in post-docs taking on additional responsibilities (see section on "Role")	Post-docs	In most laboratories post-docs have access to more than one PI and often there is more than one post-doc. The absence of a particular PI need not therefore be a source of stress.	L/M	Individual staff who find this a problem should speak to others in the group or arrange with their PI for cover in their absence. PIs should anticipate periods of absence to ensure that post-docs continue to perform efficiently. PIs to keep in contact with their research group if away for more than few days.	Post-docs, PIs

Lack of support from management or co-workers	Post-docs	Post-docs can approach their PI or, if the PI is the perceived problem, can approach the Head of Division, Head of College or Dean of School of Research. The HR Officer responsible for the College has a clinic on site every week and, where a problem exists that cannot be resolved locally, can be approached for advice.	L	Staff who feel they are unsupported to seek help through the channels indicated in the previous column. The new Post-doc Association is also a forum where these issues can be raised and where colleagues can support one another.	Post-docs, PIs, HOD, Head of College, Dean of School of Research, HR Officer
Unable to balance life at work and outside work	Post-docs	The University has family friendly policies and seeks to help people with this issue if this can be done whilst meeting the organisational needs of the College. The HR Officer holds clinics on-site and can provide advice and support, and the University Counselling Service is available to all staff. The Institute of Sport and Exercise also run classes that may be of help. Posters giving details of well-being contacts are displayed throughout the College.	L/M	PIs 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 PI or the HR Officer before the problem becomes an emergency. Post-docs can provide support for one another through the Post-doc Association.	Post-docs, PIs, 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	Post-docs	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/M	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.	PIs, HR Officer, Post-docs
Poor management control of workplace behaviour, management/supervisory styles, poor relationships with colleagues	Post-docs	Staff can approach their PI about this and they will take it further if it cannot be dealt with locally. If the PI is the perceived problem, Head of Division, Head of College or Dean of School of Research can be approached.	L/M	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, PIs, HODs, Dean of School of Research

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
Post-docs are often given responsibility for the day-to-day running of a research lab including training new post-docs or post-graduate students in techniques and giving guidance when required. This can impinge on their own research by causing interruptions and taking time.	Post-docs, post-grads, honours students, summer students	This is advantageous to the post-docs in that it gives them experience in running a research lab and instructing others. The post-doc can, to a large extent, take control of the situation by pre-arranging discussions and training to suit their schedule. A Time Management course is available.	L/M	PIs should be monitoring this and post-docs should speak to their PI if they perceive that the balance of personal research and supervisory roles is inappropriate.	PIs, post-docs

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 necessary. Post-docs are on fixed-term contracts and therefore, any time lost due to relocations may be stressful, particularly if the move happens near the end of their contract.	All staff	Proposed relocations are known about well in advance and staff encouraged to schedule them into their research programme. Every effort is made to keep staff informed and minimise disruption	M	PIs and senior management will continue to keep staff informed of proposed changes and relocations and discuss with individuals how their research programmes will be accommodated.	Head of College, Dean of School of Research, PIs
Many post-docs are from overseas and have to deal with a change of country/culture at the same time as starting	All staff	Most labs have numerous overseas personnel who provide mutual advice and support to new overseas staff. The HR Officer deals with	M	PIs will encourage social events that allow new staff, particularly those from overseas, to integrate into the group and College. All	

<p>a new job. Settling into a new work environment can be stressful to all new staff, no matter where they come from.</p>		<p>many of the administrative matters related to their work and can provide advice. The Post-doc Association enables all new post-docs to meet their colleagues and they also meet at the various induction courses/meetings. Many labs organize social events to which all new staff are invited. The University runs various events for overseas staff and students, particularly at the beginning of Semester 1. These are advertised on campus, on the Hermes notices on the University web sites and in Contact.</p>		<p>group members will continue to help new staff to settle in. Sources of information about events will be brought to the attention of all new starts.</p>
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