

Work related Stress Risk Assessment Form

Unit : College of Life Sciences	Individual/Group : Post-graduate students	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-graduate research student 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-grads	Post grads are supervised by a member of academic staff. They are usually funded by a grant awarded for a specific research project. Although supervised, they set their own schedules and make many of their own decisions, consulting their supervisor or a more experienced researcher in their group when they need guidance. They are also assigned a Thesis Committee comprising two or three academic staff, who are not their supervisor. Any issue relating to the student can be raised at these committees which meet at prescribed times during the studentship	L	Thesis committees will continue to meet at the prescribed times and provide a forum to monitor progress and for post-grads to raise issues	Supervisors, thesis committee, post-grads

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 often cannot be completed within normal hours. PhD students do not have fixed hours and may feel pressure from their peers and others to work very long hours.	Post-grads	The nature of research in life sciences requires that post-grads frequently work outwith normal working hours. However, they are also able to have time off during normal hours.	L/M	Supervisors and post-docs in the lab to be aware of the hours that the post-grads work and give guidance if they feel the hours worked are too long. Post-grads to take proper holidays and breaks	Supervisors, post-docs, post-grads
Unsuitable work environment. Laboratory work is sometimes hazardous and this may be the cause of stress to some post-grads	Post-grads	Risk assessments are carried out and acted on. Training in health and safety is given to all post-grads - 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, and more experienced researchers are available in most labs to assist.	L	Prompt action on any reported problems with heating, ventilation etc. Post-grads will notify the lab manager or their supervisor of any problems or if they are unsure about anything relating to their work environment.	Post-grads, post-docs, lab managers, Estates, Supervisors
Scientific research is a highly competitive field and there is great pressure to achieve. Funding bodies look for returns for their investment in the form of published papers, scientific advances and possible commercial spin-offs. A future career in science is dependent on progress and success. There is pressure to complete lab work and write up a thesis to submit for a PhD within the time limit allowed.	Post-grads	Post-grads are encouraged to attend and to present Posters or papers at relevant scientific meetings. There are regular in-house seminars, and research groups hold regular meetings where post-grads, present their data for comment and input from the group. Throughout their studentship, each post-grad has a series of pre-scheduled meetings with a thesis committee, comprising two or three academics other than their supervisor, where progress is reviewed, and problems of any kind discussed. The College has a Post-graduate Director available for consultation	M	Supervisors should see their post-grads regularly to ensure that they are progressing, and action should be taken as early as possible if there is a problem. Post-grads should communicate problems to their supervisor or their thesis committee, with whom they meet regularly.	Post-grads, Supervisors, thesis committee

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
Inadequate training. Some new post-grad students are disinclined to ask for help or training	Post-grads	Lab managers show the students round the labs on their arrival and train them on the standard lab equipment. Post-docs and more experienced students provide training on more specialized equipment and external training is arranged if required. A series of generic skills training courses runs throughout each studentship.	L/M	Supervisors, post-docs and lab managers to be alert to the possibility that a student needs further training.	Supervisor, post-grad, thesis committee, lab managers
Isolation from others. The move from successful undergraduate to new post-graduate student can be challenging and students may feel isolated in a lab where everyone knows each other.	Post-grads	Most post-grads do not work in isolation but in laboratories where they are part of a research team and in daily contact with other researchers and lab staff. Students from across the College meet periodically for social events and at generic skills training courses. The annual residential College symposium and the seminar programme provide opportunities to interact with researchers from across the College, as do the coffee rooms and cafeteria.	L	Supervisors should encourage post-grads to meet with post-grads from other labs, and should ensure that they are integrating into the lab group.	Post-grads, supervisors
Remote management. Many academics travel extensively and are involved in outside activities/bodies which necessitate their being out of the labs for a significant percentage of the time.	Post-grads	In most laboratories there is a research group, and the more senior members provide day-to-day supervision and help.	L	Individual students who find this a problem should speak to their supervisor and others in the group and/or their thesis committee	Supervisors, post-grads, thesis committee
Lack of support from management or coworkers	Post-grads	If the problem is with other workers in the lab, the supervisor will deal with this. If the student feels his/her supervisor does not support them, the matter should be raised with the thesis committee	L	This topic should be discussed every time the post-grad meets with their thesis committee.	Post-grads, supervisors, thesis committee

Unable to balance life at work and outside work.	Post-grads	Supervisors are available at all times to advise, and the thesis committees are also there to help. The University Counselling Service is available to all staff and students. 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	Supervisors should be sensitive to how their students are coping and provide help, either informally or by suggesting that staff contact the relevant person in the University. Post-grads should notify their supervisor if they feel that this is becoming a problem	Post-grads, thesis committee, supervisors
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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-grads	The University has policies covering all these issues. Supervisors, the thesis committee, the Counselling Service and the Student Advisory Service are available for consultation. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated in the College or University.	L	Management to be on the lookout for such behaviour and to deal with it promptly at a local level. Students should report such incidents at an early stage.	Head of College, supervisors, thesis committee, post-grads
Poor management control of workplace behaviour, management/supervisory styles, poor relationships with colleagues	Post-grads	Students can approach their supervisor about this and they will take it further if it cannot be dealt with locally. If the supervisor is the perceived problem, the thesis committee is available. If the problem cannot be resolved, the Head of College 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, supervisors, Post-grad Advisers

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
Most post-grads have the opportunity to assist with undergraduate teaching either by leading tutorials or by being	Post-grads	The staff who organise these teaching rotas try to share the workload in a fair and sensible way so that no student has too much teaching	L	Staff will to continue to monitor this and students should ensure that they get this balance right.	College Demonstrator, post-grads, PIs

demonstrators in practical classes. This is an opportunity to gain experience and also to earn money. Students may be tempted to volunteer for an amount of teaching that would be detrimental to their progress with their research project		activity. Students check with their supervisors before agreeing to teach.			
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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.

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As the College of Life Sciences has developed in the last 5 years, relocations of research groups have been necessary. Post-grads have a limited time in which to complete and submit their research and therefore, any time lost due to relocations is a cause of stress, particularly if the move happens near the end of their project	All staff and post-grads	Proposed relocations are known about well in advance and students encouraged to schedule them into their research programme. Every effort is made to keep students informed and minimise disruption	L/M	Supervisors and senior management will keep staff and students informed of proposed changes and relocations and discuss with individuals how their research programmes will be accommodated.	Head of College, Supervisors, thesis committee