

Work related Stress Risk Assessment Form

Unit : College of Life Sciences	Individual/Group : Research technicians	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 research technical 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. Research technicians are funded by external grants and are appointed by the PI who holds the grant. They are supervised by the PI and often by a post-doctoral researcher in the same research group.. The technician, therefore, normally works to a schedule set by others.	Research techs	As a research technician gains experience and expertise in their field of work, they have more control over their work schedule and more say in decisions that are made. Regular interaction with the PI and others involved in the work, allows the schedule to be arranged in advance.	L	PIs, post docs and research technicians will continue to work as a team in progressing the research projects	PIs, post-docs, research technicians

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 research technicians may be required to work outwith normal working hours	Research techs	Research technicians are contracted to work a fixed number of hours and are entitled to time off in lieu for work done outwith normal working hours. It should be possible, in most cases, to predict when additional hours will be required and to make suitable arrangements for this.	L/M	PIs and post-docs to be aware of the hours worked by research technicians and give guidance if they feel the hours worked are too long. Technicians should ensure that they take proper holidays and breaks as provided for in their terms and conditions of service.	PIs, post-docs, research techs
Unsuitable work environment. Laboratory work is sometimes hazardous and this may be the cause of stress to some staff.	Research techs	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.	L	Prompt action on any reported problems with heating, ventilation etc. Technicians to notify the lab manager of any problems or if they are unsure about anything relating to their work environment.	Post-docs, research techs, lab managers, Estates, PIs
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. The future employment of a research technician can depend on progress and success.	Research techs	The research technician is not responsible for the production of publications etc, but their contribution to the work is vital, and consequently they carry some of the responsibility for its success. They are encouraged to advance their careers by playing a full part in the research team and attending group meetings, seminars etc	L	PIs to ensure that their research technicians are progressing and take action early if there is a problem. Research technicians to communicate problems to their PI	Research techs, PIs
Research technicians are on fixed, short-term contracts and consequently, towards the end of these contracts there is a need to find employment here or elsewhere	Research techs	Vacancies within the University are advertised on the web and technicians have access to sources of external vacancies. The University Careers Service is available to all staff.	M/H	The College and University will continue to assist as much as possible, staff on short-term contracts to find future employment	Research techs, PIs, Careers Service

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	Research techs	Most research technicians work in busy laboratories where they are in daily contact with other researchers and lab staff. There are coffee rooms in all areas and a cafeteria. The College has a symposium weekend each year and all staff are invited to attend.	L	The College will continue to provide opportunities for staff groups to interact with each other both professionally and socially.	PIs, research technicians, College
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.	Research techs	In most laboratories there are post-docs who will supervise research techs on a day to day basis. There are also researchers from other groups and lab managers who can be consulted.	L	Individual staff who find this a problem should speak to others in the group or in the lab.	Post-docs, PIs, research techs
Lack of support from management or coworkers	Research techs	Research techs can approach their PI or, if the PI is the perceived problem, can approach the Head of Division or the College Secretary. 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.	Research techs, PIs, HOD, College Secretary, HR Officer
Unable to balance life at work and outside work	Research techs	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.	Research techs, 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	Research techs	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.	Head of College, PIs HR Officer, research techs
Poor management control of workplace behaviour, management/supervisory styles, poor relationships with colleagues	Research techs	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, the College Secretary, Head of Division 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, PIs, HODs, College Secretary, 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
Role conflicts or unsure of objectives	Research techs	This is unlikely to be an issue for this group of staff as they are employed to work in a specific area. Should they feel that their objectives are unclear they should raise this with their supervising post-doc or PI.	L	PIs to continue to ensure that their research technicians are clear about their objectives	PIs, post-docs, research technicians

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. Research technicians are on fixed contracts and therefore, any time lost due to relocations is a stress, 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