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Imperial workplace stress risk assessment

1. Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related stress as "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work". People react to pressure differently and the point at which pressure starts to cause stress will likely differ too.

The key is to keep staff motivated and engaged by ensuring they understand the University and Departmental goals and have clear objectives that support these goals and that are achievable within the timeframes set.

Imperial acknowledges that the activities conducted by staff could lead to work stress related issues, and we are committed to have processes, procedures, training, monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place to reduce the risk associated with this potential work hazard.

Students have support for managing stress and well-being through their departmental and student-facing service structures and are therefore out of scope of this document.

Imperial strives to provide an inclusive environment that supports the wellbeing of our contractors and visitors.

We acknowledge that there are instances, particularly amongst those combining teaching and research work with clinical commitments, and those with caring responsibilities, where determining the source of the stress can be difficult, and line management support should help in managing these situations.

2. The risk assessment process

This section of the document describes general elements of how to conduct a stress risk assessment, the factors and types of controls to consider. Section 3 of the document contains Imperial's stress risk assessment, how our activities could impact on the stressors under consideration and the controls identified.

The HSE 5 steps to a risk assessment, as illustrated in the HSE stress management framework, have been followed when developing Imperial's workplace risk assessment.

These five steps are:

2.1 Identify the stress risk factors

The HSE identifies key work-related factors with potential to cause stress related health- illness are:

- ➢ Job demands
- ➢ Control
- ➢ Relationships
- ➢ Role/Competency

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➢ Support
➢ Change

Factors outside work which may impact the individual's behaviour/ performance at work is another factor to consider, especially intersections with other stress factors such as caring responsibilities, economic and financial concerns.

2.2 Decide who might be harmed and how

When developing this risk assessment, we have tried to keep in mind the needs of our community. There will be instances where more vulnerable staff members may require an individualised work stress risk assessment, particularly if they:

- have a history of significant physical, sensory or mental health difficulties or a neurodivergent condition or identity requiring reasonable adjustments.
- have been absent from work due to work-related stress or difficulties with coping in the past.
- have personal difficulties unrelated to work.
- are inexperienced in their role.
- are of a personality type which tends towards over work, over-worry or being unable to cope with pressure.
- are subject to non-work related stress factors such as caring responsibilities which will accentuate work-related stress or make them especially vulnerable to particular stressors

Managers are expected to be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to identify situations like the ones described above. There are training courses that will support the development of the required skills, such as Management and Leadership development training courses, Disability for Managers- Implementing workplace adjustments, Neurodiversity for Managers.

In the instances listed above, line managers should complete an individual stress risk assessment; there is guidance for staff and managers on how to complete it.

Consideration of other workplace hazards and risk management is available to all staff. Some people may require different considerations because of their occupational roles in the university or because they have specific requirements, e.g. young people, new and expectant mothers, diversity, lone workers, etc.

2.3 Evaluate the stress factors, including an evaluation of the controls that are in place.

There are three types of controls or interventions Imperial has considered as part of this risk assessment and they are classified as follows:

- **Primary interventions (PREVENT)**: these are preventative measures that tackle the problems at source and protect staff from work- related stress. This includes:
  - ✓ Good work design/management practices.
  - ✓ Systems to monitor and adjust workload of teams and staff members, e.g. one to one meetings with managers.
  - ✓ Structured support systems

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- ✓ Communicating change early and providing a clear rationale.
- ✓ Processes for selecting managers with the "right" skills as well as pre-appointment and on-going training for developing staff to become good managers and leaders.
- ✓ Work- life balance policies.
- **Secondary interventions (SUPPORT)**: these interventions reduce the risk of harm if/when someone is exposed to a stressor e.g., training on how to deal with a particular stressor/situation. This includes:
  - ✓ Training in how to deal with difficult situations e.g. conflict
  - ✓ Systems in place so staff can report concerns and receive responses
  - ✓ Line manager training (post-appointment)
- **Tertiary interventions (RECOVERY)**: these are reactive interventions that aim to reduce the impact of work-related stress or mental ill-health e.g., support or treatment for those who are affected.
  - ✓ Occupational health referral system
  - ✓ Return to work support
  - ✓ Rehabilitation programmes
  - ✓ Counselling

Primary interventions are the most effective in dealing with the issues, and the University aims to prioritise the implementation of these.

2.4 Record the findings; develop and implement an action plan

The University will consider additional actions that should be taken to reduce the risk of work-related stress as needed, and where relevant, these will be documented as part of the risk assessment.

2.5 Evaluation

The Health, Safety and Environment consultative committee will review this risk assessment annually, as a minimum and make recommendations to the People and Culture Committee. The People and Culture Committee will consider the recommendations made by the Health, Safety and Environment Consultative Committee, discuss the effectiveness of the controls in place and agree on additional actions to be taken, effectively approving the risk assessment. Amendments and additional actions will be recorded. Actions will be reviewed at the mentioned committees until their implementation is confirmed as complete.

3. Imperial workplace stress risk assessment

Below we analyse each of the stressors listed in the HSE stress management framework, who could be affected by these stressors, the controls/ interventions the university has already implemented and additional actions to be implemented.

3.1 Stressor: Job demands

This includes:

- o The amount, difficulty and pace of the workload, including emotional demands, deadlines and targets.
- o Working patterns, including long working hours, working out of hours at home to complete work-related tasks, multi-site and off site working and travelling time.

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    ○   The physical working environment e.g. dealing with abusive behaviour, repetitive work, lone working, noise, overcrowding, ventilation, heat/cold, interruptions, specific business process stresses, lack of daylight, humidity.

Who may be harmed and how: Staff, Young workers, those with underlying mental or physical health conditions.

Controls in place

a. Primary intervention- Preventative

Imperial has developed workload principles for the management of workloads that each Faculty and Directorate are expected to adopt to help maintain a healthy workload amongst their staff.
One to one meetings with line managers are needed to identify and address in a timely manner any issues that may be arising. As a minimum, these one to ones should take place monthly and take into consideration hybrid working patterns. Managers should actively encourage open communication and remain approachable, ensuring they are easy to contact whether working onsite or remotely.

The University has an annual review conversation (ARC) process in place, which is aimed at facilitating the conversation between line managers and those reporting to them. Topics to discuss include performance on previous agreed objectives, what works well, what needs to be improved, career support, aspirations and other aspects related to the job delivered by a person.

The University offers Leadership development training, which includes learning objectives on behavioural impact and the consequences of negative behaviours. 360 tools and accessing executive coaching is part of the offer of this training course.
The University has a People and Organisational Development Team (POD) who develop, manage and deliver a wide range of training courses, many of them aimed at developing core skills, including managing your workload, prioritisation skills, effective conversation skills for line managers, being your most effective self in the workplace, etc. The full list of core skills development can be found in the POD pages.
Imperial has an Organisational Development Consultancy (ODC), part of the POD Team, which provides expertise in different organisational development aspects, including: growing management and leadership skills, coaching, mentoring (including reverse mentoring) as well as providing advice on organisational design and change management.
Other training courses aimed at providing managers with the right skills include:, Disability for managers - implementing workplace adjustments | Administration and support services | Imperial College London, which provides an insight into the support that can be provided for disabled staff. The training is aimed at supporting managers to develop the skills necessary to ensure that disabled staff at Imperial are able to work at their best, without any barrier to success.

Neurodiversity for managers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London

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Aimed at helping managers to understand the common workplaces challenges. Knowing when and how to support neurodivergent staff.

b. Secondary intervention- Support

The University offers a wide range of wellbeing at work training aimed at academics and professional staff. The suite of courses, events and resources has been designed to support individuals' wellbeing in the workplace.
Building resilience and managing stress at work training and advice is available to all staff.
The Chaplaincy provides support and guidance on a range or spiritual and personal well-being matters.

c. Tertiary intervention- Recovery

The ODC Team can provide support to teams in addressing dysfunctional cultures and behaviours.
Human Resource Advisors have a role in advising managers on managing workplace stress.
The Occupational Health referral process is designed to help individuals and their manager understand the impact of health problems on work and provide specialist advice in the following areas:

➢ Fitness for work
➢ Return to work
➢ Rehabilitation

The Employee Assistance Program can advise employees and managers on the management of Work-related Stress. The Employee Assistance Program provides "in the moment" support and access to "Solution Focused" counselling along with a management helpline.
Mental Health First Aiders® are trained to provide peer to peer support and signpost to university resources.
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Volunteers are also able to signpost staff to sources of support.
Harassment - the management perspective | Administration and support services | Imperial College London

Helps build managers confidence in managing claims of harassment, bullying, or victimisation.

3.2 Stressor: Control

This relates to the control that people have in the way they do their work and includes:

o Lack of participation in decision making processes that applies to them
o Deadlines and targets imposed
o Insufficient control over working hours, when to take breaks, etc.
o Insufficient resources, including resources for curriculum changes, changes in role, etc.
o Lack of work-life balance
o Lack of information and training
o Lack of documented safe working practices

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Who may be harmed and how: Staff, Young workers, those with underlying mental or physical health conditions.

Controls in place

    a. Primary intervention- Preventative

The University has a formal process in place for requesting flexible working arrangements.

The University has an annual review conversation (ARC) process in place, which is aimed at facilitating the conversation between line managers and those reporting to them. Topics to discuss include performance on previous agreed objectives, what works well, what needs to be improved, career support, aspirations and other aspects related to the job delivered by a person.

The University offers Leadership development training, which includes learning objectives on behavioural impact and the consequences of negative behaviours. 360 tools and accessing executive coaching is part of the offer of this training course.

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The University offers a wide range of wellbeing at work training aimed to academics and professional staff. The suite of courses, events and resources has been designed to support individuals' wellbeing in the workplace. Building resilience and managing stress at work training and advice is available to all staff.
The Chaplaincy provides support and guidance on a range or spiritual and personal well-being matters

    c. Tertiary intervention- Recovery

The Occupational Health referral process is designed to help individuals and their manager understand the impact of health problems on work and provide specialist advice in the following areas:
- ➢ Fitness for work
- ➢ Return to work
- ➢ Rehabilitation

HR advisors can advise managers on addressing issues which arise.
The Employee Assistance Program can advise employees and managers on the management of Work-related Stress. The Employee Assistance Program provides "in the moment" support and access to "Solution Focused" counselling along with a management helpline.
Mental Health First Aiders® are trained to provide peer to peer support and signpost to university resources.
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Volunteers are also able to signpost staff to sources of support.
Staff is encouraged to report Health and Safety incidents or concerns using Imperial's Safety reporting system.
Departmental Safety Officers and Faculty Safety Advisors and other safety personnel, as well as the Safety Department, conduct regular inspections and audits of workplace safety arrangements, evaluating compliance with regulatory

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and Imperial's requirements. Shortfalls identified are raised as finding and addressed.

3.3 Stressor: Relationships

Relationships refers to the way we interact with other people at work e.g. relationship with managers, peers and others, which can have an impact on the way we feel. This includes:

- o Unfair treatment by managers and decision makers

- o Harassment or discrimination of specific categories of staff, e.g. women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+
- o Bullying, intimidation or other victimisation from managers, other staff or students.
- o Dealing with heavy emotional demands
- o Lack of line management support
- o Isolation: no forum for staff to discuss common issues
- o Poor communication: both vertical and horizontal
- o Lack of social space/canteen facilities.

Controls in place

a. Primary intervention- Preventative

The College has defined Values and Behaviours | About | Imperial College London that apply to all staff and students. Respect and Collaboration are two of the five Imperial values. Positive and negative behaviours in relation to these have been defined Values - Behaviour Framework (imperial.ac.uk) and communicated to all staff members.

Disability for managers - implementing workplace adjustments | Administration and support services | Imperial College London

Which provides an insight into the support that can be provided for disabled staff. The aim is to help managers develop the skills necessary to ensure that disabled staff at Imperial are able to work at their best, without any barrier to success.

Neurodiversity for managers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London
Aimed at helping managers to understand the common workplaces challenges. Knowing when and how to support neurodivergent staff.

b. Secondary intervention- Support
Staff Supporters | Administration and support services | Imperial College London
Trained volunteers who provide confidential assistance on a range of issues including signposting to resources and services available to staff.
The Trade Unions (Unison, Unite and UCU) provide advice and support to staff members on a wide range of subjects, including health and safety, equality and diversity, and employee rights and representation.
Harassment Support Contacts | Administration and support services | Imperial College London

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The Chaplaincy provides support and guidance on a range or spiritual and personal well-being matters.

c. Tertiary intervention- Recovery

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Helps build managers confidence in managing claims of harassment, bullying, or victimisation.

Mediation

Mediation is a confidential process where a neutral, non-judgemental third party brings the parties in conflict together in a safe environment to facilitate open and honest dialogue as a first step in helping the parties find mutually agreed solutions.

Resolution

The Resolution Policy and Procedure replaces the Grievance Policy and supports the College's commitment to promoting and nurturing a positive working environment with good working relationships where people are treated with mutual respect. The Resolution Policy and Procedure aims to provide members of staff with a reasonable and prompt opportunity to resolve any complaints and aims to secure constructive and lasting solutions to workplace conflict

The Employee Assistance Program can advise employees and managers on the management of Work-related Stress. The Employee Assistance Program provides "in the moment" support and access to "Solution Focused" counselling along with a management helpline.

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Equality Diversity and Inclusion Volunteers are also able to signpost staff to sources of support.

3.4 Stressor: Role/Competency

There are two potential stress factors related to this element:

o **Role conflict** this exists when a person is torn between conflicting job demands, or by completing tasks that the person does not believe are part of their role e.g. job responsibilities heavy and demanding, overly target/deadline driven culture.

o **Role ambiguity:** this is where a person does not have a clear picture of their work objectives. Examples of this include:

• Lack of clarity about role
• Unclear job description
• Job changes without consultation or input

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- Feeling undervalued
- Organisational change without consultation or input.

Who may be harmed and how: Staff. Young workers, those with underlying mental or physical health conditions.

Controls in place

a. Primary intervention- Preventative

Each staff member has a job description associated with their role. Job descriptions should be reviewed regularly and updated following change management protocols.

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Mental Health First Aiders® are trained to provide peer to peer support and signpost to university resources.
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3.5 Stressor: Support

This refers to formal and informal activities undertaken by management that do not support those reporting to them. It includes:

- Lack of career development and promotion routes
- Few or no training opportunities
- An over competitive culture
- Delegation of responsibilities without the authority to take decisions.
- Blame culture
- Lack of respect for staff
- Poor communication throughout the institution (support may be underutilised).

Who may be harmed and how: Staff. Young workers, those with underlying mental or physical health conditions.

Controls in place

a. Primary intervention- Preventative
Imperial has developed workload principles for the management of workloads that each Faculty and Directorate are expected to adopt to help maintain a healthy workload amongst their staff.

The University has an annual review conversation (ARC) process in place, which is aimed at facilitating the conversation between line managers and those reporting to them. Topics to discuss include performance on previous agreed objectives, what works well, what needs to be improved, career support, aspirations and other aspects related to the job delivered by a person.

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Imperial has an Organisational Development Consultancy (ODC), part of the POD Team, which provides expertise in different organisational development aspects, including: growing management and leadership skills, coaching,

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mentoring (including reverse mentoring) as well as providing advice on organisational design and change management.
Other training courses aimed at providing managers with the right skills include:,

[Disability for managers - implementing workplace adjustments | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)
Which provides an insight into the support that can be provided for disabled staff. The aim to help managers develop the skills necessary to ensure that disabled staff at Imperial are able to work at their best, without any barrier to success.

[Neurodiversity for managers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)
Aimed at helping managers to understand the common workplaces challenges. Knowing when and how to support neurodivergent staff.

b.   Secondary intervention- Support
The University has a People and Organisational Development Team (POD) who develop, manage and deliver a wide range of training courses, many of them aimed at developing core skills, including [managing your workload](#), [prioritisation skills](#), [effective conversation skills for line managers](#), [being your most effective self in the workplace](#), etc. [The full list of core skills development can be found in the POD pages](#).
The University offers a wide range of [wellbeing at work training](#) aimed to academics and professional staff. The suite of courses, events and resources has been designed to support individuals' wellbeing in the workplace.
[Building resilience and managing stress at work](#) training and advice is available to all staff.
The [Chaplaincy](#) provides support and guidance on a range or spiritual and personal well-being matters

c.   Tertiary intervention- Recovery

[The Occupational Health referral process](#) is designed to help individuals and their manager understand the impact of health problems on work and provide specialist advice in the following areas:
  ➢ Fitness for work
  ➢ Return to work
  ➢ Rehabilitation
[The Employee Assistance Program](#) can advise employees and managers on the management of Work-related Stress. The Employee Assistance Program which provides "in the moment" support and access to "Solution Focused" counselling along with a management helpline.
[Harassment - the management perspective | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)
Helps build managers confidence in managing claims of harassment, bullying, or victimisation.

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Mental Health First Aiders® are trained to provide peer to peer support and signpost to university resources.
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Volunteers are also able to signpost staff to sources of support.

3.6 Stressor: Change

Restructuring and reorganisation, job cuts, unexpected increased in workloads. These changes can lead to an increase in work-related stress when not communicated and managed well. This includes:

> ➤ Failure to meaningfully consult over changes or given the opportunity to have input
> ➤ Lack of resources and time to manage new initiatives and change
> ➤ The pace and intensity of change
> ➤ The introduction of new technologies and change, without training communication, or input
> ➤ The pace and intensity of change
> ➤ The amount of new educational/ workplace initiatives that staff have to deal with.

Who may be harmed and how: Staff. Young workers, those with underlying mental or physical health conditions.

Controls in place

a. Primary intervention-Preventative

The Change Management policy

While formal consultation is not required for minor changes, staff should still be consulted about changes that have an impact on their work. Managers should meet with staff either individually or collectively to explain the reasons for the need to implement any minor changes and to ask for views before final planning and implementation. Staff may wish to be accompanied by a Trades Union representative or colleague at a meeting to discuss changes to duties and working practices and this should be permitted. Under exceptional circumstances the manager and Human Resources representative will consider requests for accompaniment by a relative or friend, this individual must not be a legal representative This does not negate the right of a manager to meet with a member of staff, on a one-to-one basis, to discuss day to day working issues in-line with broader HR policies.
The policy also requires an Equality Impact assessment which should highlight those who may be most at risk. Consideration of intersectional stressors should be included in this assessment.

The Strategic Programmes and Change team facilitates change and champions a culture of continuous improvement at Imperial College London. They have a range of tool kits to cover the following broad areas:

> ➤ Project initiation
> ➤ Project closure
> ➤ Project management
> ➤ Change management

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> ➢ Communication
> ➢ Consultation

b. Secondary intervention-Support
Staff Supporters | Administration and support services | Imperial College London
Trained volunteers who provide confidential assistance on a range of issues including signposting to resources and services available to staff.
Harassment Support Contacts | Administration and support services | Imperial College London
Trained volunteers providing a confidential, peer-to-peer, listening service for staff. To help explore the informal and formal options available.
The Trade Unions (Unison, Unite and UCU) provide advice and support to staff members on a wide range of subjects, including health and safety, equality and diversity, and employee rights and representation.

c. Tertiary intervention- Recovery

The Occupational Health referral process is designed to help individuals and their manager understand the impact of health problems on work and provide specialist advice in the following areas:
> ➢ Fitness for work
> ➢ Return to work
> ➢ Rehabilitation

Mediation
Mediation is a confidential process where a neutral, non-judgemental third party brings the parties in conflict together in a safe environment to facilitate open and honest dialogue as a first step in helping the parties find mutually agreed solutions.

Resolution
The Resolution Policy and Procedure replaces the Grievance Policy and supports Imperial's commitment to promoting and nurturing a positive working environment with good working relationships where people are treated with mutual respect. The Resolution Policy and Procedure aims to provide members of staff with a reasonable and prompt opportunity to resolve any complaints and aims to secure constructive and lasting solutions to workplace conflict.

3.7 Stressor: Factors outside work

There may be factors outside work which may have contributed to or added to the pressure at work. These factors may have made it harder to cope with demands at work. If these adverse personal circumstances are shared, the line manager may be able to help at work and make adjustments, for example, being more flexible with working hours until issues are resolved, being sympathetic to the pressures staff are under or coming up with suitable temporary arrangements that would help the staff member. The line manager can be supported by a Human resources partner if necessary.

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Global or national political instability may present challenges for members of the university community, particularly where the economic pressures pose a threat to the safety welfare /wellbeing of the individual(s) concerned.
Primary and secondary interventions are not listed under this stressor as Imperial does not hold the power to either prevent or identify and proactively support external factors that may have an impact on our staff.

Tertiary intervention- Recovery
All Imperial staff and members of their families living with them can get free professional and confidential help from Confidential Care, Imperial's Employee Assistance Provider, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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4. Other actions

Other initiatives the University is working on, and actions agreed requiring further development have been collated below.

Stressor the action relates to	Type of Intervention i.e. Primary, secondary, tertiary	Description of the Intervention	Intervention owner	Due date
Workload, relationships, control, support.	Primary	Although there are a number of training modules aimed at staff managers, none of these are mandatory. There should be a mandatory training module that equips staff with the "management skills" required to support staff. The training should be completed at the point when someone acquires line management responsibilities.	POD	TBC
Workload, relationships, control, support	Primary	Training course on self-leadership: comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself towards the performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating.	POD	TBC
Workload, relationships, control, support, change	Primary	Regular one to ones with line managers are not happening consistently or are not being used effectively. These meetings are key for staff and their line managers to discuss and agree on the management of issues that are arising. A campaign will be developed to highlight the importance of having regular, effective, one to one meetings.	HRs	TBC

5. Workplace stress risk assessment review process

This workplace stress risk assessment will be reviewed by the Health and Safety Consultative Committee and the People and Culture Committee annually as a minimum, and termly while there are on-going actions to be implemented, so updates can be provided.

In addition, monitoring on wellbeing Key Performance Indicators will be reported to UMB and HoDs monthly, and termly to the H&S Management Committee.

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