

Uwe Bristol Branch

LISTENING TO, WORKING WITH, PROMOTING THE NEEDS OF MEMBERS AND STRIVING FOR A SECURE FUTURE.

Branch news



Remember to keep an eye on your bundles and your stress!

Mental Health and Well Being

We were pleased to see the Vice-Chancellor publish a blog entitled [Mental Health for Everyone](#) at the end of June. Imagine our surprise when it made absolutely no mention of the mental health of staff! Not a single line suggests actions that the VC is seeking to implement to improve the mental well-being of staff at the University. Amongst the ideas he puts forward to help students' mental health (which we, as a union, wholeheartedly endorse) are the following:

monitoring year on year [the] mental health of the population

If we take sickness absence as a measure of the mental health of staff, then the university has a poor track record. Last year 19.6% of sickness days were taken because of stress and depression (4,588 days). Reporting of fatigue has also increased year-on-year – 3.9% of sickness absence was due to overwork and fatigue.

Engage every department and team of the university [needs to be involved] in a conversation that reduces stigma and encourages disclosure and appropriate help seeking

This is, sadly, not a behaviour that is currently being modelled around the university. Just 120 staff used the

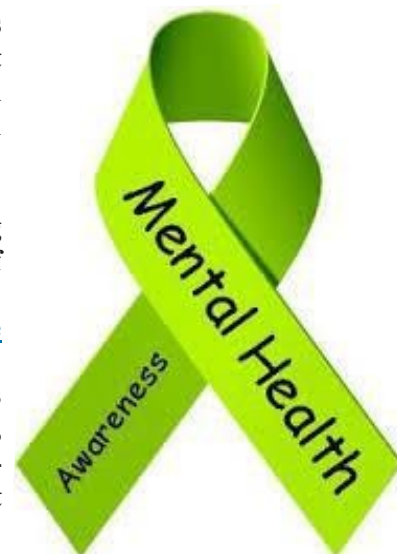
Workload: Top Tips....
Say no to unbundled work....
Make the system work for you too!

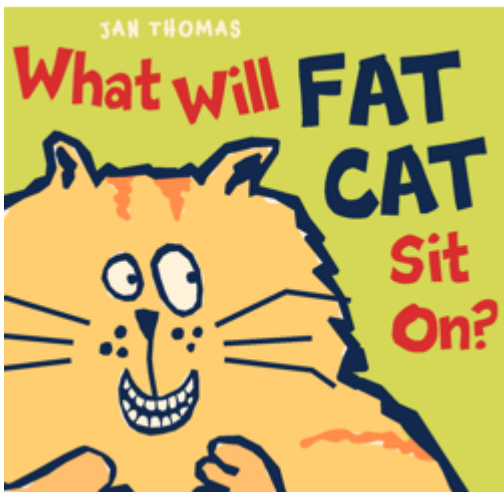
telephone counselling helpline available through the Employee Assistance Programme and this resulted in only 59 referrals for structured counselling.

Given this rather lacklustre record, it is perhaps little wonder that the VC shied away from talking about staff mental health in his blog. But if he is to have any credibility speaking out on this issue, then he needs to take a serious look at the causes of stress and poor mental health amongst staff.

If you are feeling stressed, do make use of the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

If a problem at work is the cause of that stress, your UCU representatives are here to support you.





**Not you if you are
in UCU!!!!**

**The Time is now to make
change
happen...**



Are you being asked to work above your Grade?

UCU reps are aware that in some areas those employed as Lecturers (on G grade) appear to have been asked to undertake duties that should be carried out by Senior Lecturers and above (H-grade +).

UWE's pay grading system is based on the HERA (Higher Education Role Analysis) criteria as well as the NARP guidelines (National Academic Role Profiles). These have been matched against G and H grades and the resultant profiles are described on the HR web pages.

<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/pages/search.aspx?k=narp&s=Human%20Resources&start1=1>

There are a number of differences between these two grades but they can be summarised in relation to overall responsibility. G grade lecturers may require mentoring, development and guidance in order to fulfil their role, and their focus is on delivery of learning that has already been designed. H grades are responsible for designing and developing teaching and assessment, leading modules and co-ordinating the work of others.

If you are carrying out 'H Grade' duties you should be entitled to 'H Grade' Pay

Some examples of the differences between G and H grades (Taken from HR profiles for G and H grades based on NARP at Levels 2 and 3 – for further details see HR online)

G Grade (Level 2 NARP)

Teach as a member of a teaching team in a developing capacity within an established programme of study, with the assistance of a mentor if required

Ensure that content, methods of delivery and learning materials will meet the defined learning objectives.

Select appropriate assessment instruments and criteria, assess the work and progress of students

Manage own teaching, research and administrative activities, with guidance if required

Share responsibility in deciding how to deliver modules and assess students

H Grade (Level 3 NARP)

Design teaching material and deliver either across a range of modules or within a subject area.

Identify areas where current provision is in need of revision or improvement.

Contribute to the planning, design and development of objectives and material.

Set, mark and assess work and examinations and provide feedback to students.

As module leader or tutor, co-ordinate with others (such as support staff or academic colleagues) to ensure student needs and expectations are met.

Act as a responsible team member, leading where agreed, and develop productive working relationships with other members of staff.

Co-ordinate the work of colleagues to identify and respond to students' needs.

Responsibility for the design and delivery of own modules and assessment methods

Co-ordinate the work of others to ensure modules are delivered to the standards required

Manage projects relating to own area of work and the organisation of external activities such as placements and field trips.

Be responsible for administrative duties in areas such as admissions, time-tabling, examinations, assessment of progress and student attendance.

UCU members - If you believe you may be entitled to payment at a higher grade, read the HR grading profiles and discuss with your UCU representative. This may have been presented to you as a developmental opportunity but this is only acceptable if you will be considered for the grade above in the near future.



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STRESS AT UWE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) list six potential causes of stress in the work-place:

- ◆ **Demand** Workload management, work pattern, and work environment.
- ◆ **Control** The power a person has to manage the way they work.
- ◆ **Support** Including encouragement, sponsorship, and resources provided by the employer, line management, and colleagues.
- ◆ **Relationships** Including promoting positive working to avoid conflict, dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- ◆ **Role** Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether they have conflicting roles.
- ◆ **Change** How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The recent staff survey at UWE found that only 29% of faculty staff agreed that they were able to complete their work without regularly working unreasonable hours and only 13% agreed that they were consulted when change occurred. In addition, there was also significant disagreement with statements concerning relationships and communication at UWE, with only 13% of faculty staff agreeing that their voice was being heard. These results support our previous survey which found that 60% of members reported to have experienced adverse effects on their health as a result of stress at work.

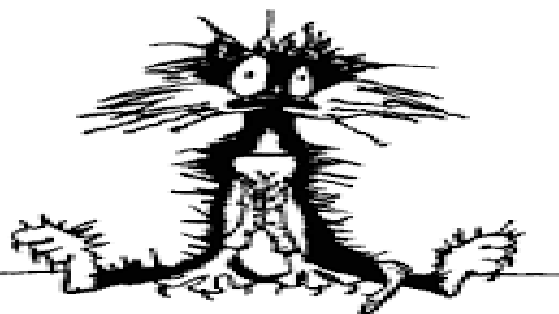
UWE management stated (In the Management of Stress at Work Standard) that:
The Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Executive Deans and Directors of Professional Services will ensure:

- ◆ A culture that embraces good and effective communication, close staff involvement and clarity of roles and expectations – in particular during times of change.
- ◆ Appropriate planning and allocation of resources to alleviate any demands that may be placed upon staff.

UCU are concerned that these commitments are not currently being achieved, and that management's response may yet again not sufficiently addressed the issues.



Before Work



After Work

UCU makes a difference



How long can you be expected to work without being given a break?

Working Time Regulations

Surveys of staff in teaching, research and academic related roles have repeatedly shown they work long hours, often well beyond their contracted hours. For many staff a linked concern is the absence of proper provision for breaks during work.

The Working Time Regulations 1998 first introduced a provision that requires employers **to allow** workers a break of a minimum of 20 minutes after six hours at work. In 2006 the law was amended so that employers are required **to ensure** that their workers took their rest breaks.

Incidentally, the guidance to the Display Screen Equipment Regulations recommends regular breaks away from the screen, but emphasises these are not breaks from work – simply that DSE users should be able to undertake other tasks away from the screen.

Health, welfare and risk assessments

Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations require employers to provide facilities for workers to rest and eat meals. The associated code of practice says that employers must provide eating facilities, something to heat up workers' own food, and the means to make a hot drink. In order to enjoy these facilities, workers must be able to take a break - but other than the Working Time Regulations, there is no specific piece of legislation that puts a duty directly on employers to give workers breaks during the working day.

What your UCU rep could do is argue a case on health and welfare grounds, based on the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, (HASAWA) and the risk assessment procedures.

The HASAWA:

states that it shall be the duty of every employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of his employees

requires the system of work is safe and without risks to health

requires the provision of a working environment that is safe, without risks to health, and is adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare.

Lack of opportunity to have a rest in a job that is mentally demanding, (and can be physically demanding as well), or not giving staff the chance to have a drink and something to eat during a period of, say, more than three hours, is not adequate provision for welfare. Such a system of work could put staff health at risk, especially those who are older colleagues, or who may have some medical condition (it could be very serious for someone with diabetes, for example) or whose workload is causing them stress and consequent health problems. Excessive workload is one of the most common reasons for stress-related illness in the FE & HE sectors.

So UCU reps could reasonably argue that it is both unreasonable and a breach of the duty not to include a break period for staff somewhere between sessions. A lot of employers will sit back on the Working Time Regulations standard as evidence of compliance with the relevant statutory standard, but the arguments for a lesser period would appear to be valid under the HASAWA.

Employers are required by law to undertake risk assessments. A couple of key factors related to long hours of work should be included in these assessments - one is stress, the other is fatigue - both mental and physical.

Action for UCU safety reps

Your safety rep should ask for copies of the key points of the risk assessments undertaken on the lecturer's job. The employer is required by law to provide a copy if a safety rep requests one.

Having done the assessment, employers have to put measures in place to eliminate or minimise the risks identified, (these should also be recorded as part of the assessment record). These measures should remove or amend procedures and practices that were causing the problem. In considering what breaks if any are possible, or are taken, employers and members need to take account not only of formal scheduled teaching and student support, or research, but of the myriad of meetings and other activities which they are required to undertake to meet their contractual duties to the required standard.

If there is no mention of either stress or fatigue in the risk assessments, your safety rep should challenge them and ask for a review which should include both stress and fatigue as potential hazards to health, thus identifying them as risk factors. If members who have complained, the rep should bring the complaints formally to management's attention (staff needn't be identified directly) as these demonstrate that a problem exists. Your safety rep might consider doing a workplace inspection or survey, to find out more about the problem, how widespread it is, and so on.

Having had it drawn to their attention, the management should then consider what action to take. They should discuss this with the UCU reps. As a minimum, UCU reps might suggest some measures to help overcome the problems - like getting them to agree that regular breaks after a maximum of three hours are needed, ensuring that timetables always allow a maximum number of hours work before a break, etc. It is always better to make some suggestions to help the management resolve the problem than just ask them what they are going to do about it.

A simple local agreement can ensure that pressure for staff to work continuous sessions can easily be prevented, or even just an agreement reached (and recorded in the minutes) at a meeting with management. It should be perfectly possible in the twenty-first century for any reasonable employer to ensure that staff are able to have a break after a reasonable period during a long working day without resorting to lots of argument.

