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Abstract

Drawing on the findings of a recent national survey, this article examines the extent to which higher education institutions in the United Kingdom meet the minimum standards recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for the management of work-related stressors. A comparison is also made between the average weekly working hours reported in the current survey with those found in two previous studies of the higher education sector (1998 and 2004). A sample of 9,740 academic and academic-related employees working in higher education institutions in the UK completed a measure of seven job-related stressors (or psychosocial hazards) (that is, demands, control, support from colleagues and managers, interpersonal relationships, role clarity and involvement in organisational change). With one exception (job control), levels of job-related stressors in the higher education sector exceeded the benchmarks stipulated by the HSE. Stressors relating to change, role, job demands and managerial support were particularly high. Recommendations made by the HSE for interim and longer-term targets to be achieved for the management of each stressor category are

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provided. Findings also revealed that average working hours remain high in the sector, with many employees continuing to exceed the weekly limit set by the UK Working Time Directive. The utility of the HSE approach in higher education institutions and ways in which the sector might work towards meeting the HSE management standards and consequently enhance employee well-being are considered. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)