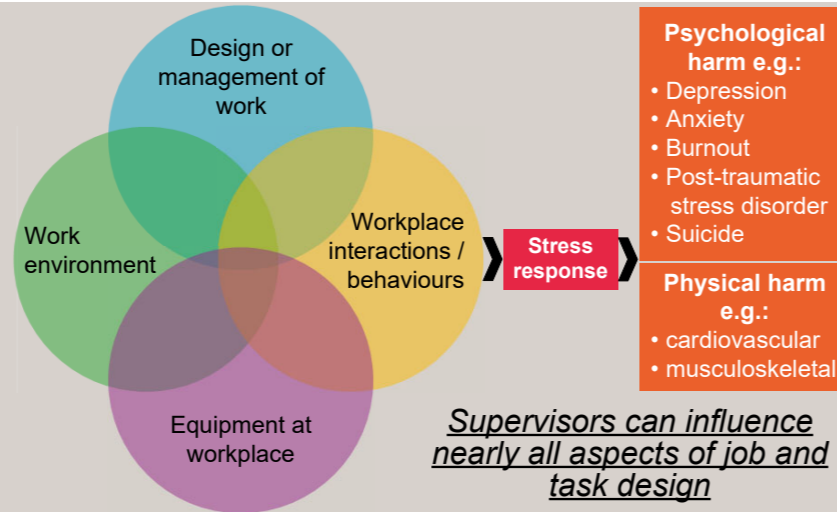


# Psychosocial hazards for Supervisors

## What are psychosocial hazards?

Psychosocial hazards are anything at work that may cause psychological or physical harm. These stem from:

- the way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised
- tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks
- the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments, and
- social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.



Hazard	How leaders support this	Signs there are issues
<b>Job demands</b> are physical, mental and emotional. Excessively high or low can cause harm if severe, prolonged or frequent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Conduct ongoing/regular assessments of workload and tasks</li> <li>□ Set a positive example (e.g., take regular breaks, leave on time)</li> <li>□ Be vigilant of periods of peak demands and support the team</li> <li>□ Invest in systems that support effective work</li> <li>□ Provide supportive environments (such as quiet spaces for demanding work)</li> <li>□ Create/encourage conversations within the team around workload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports of high workloads</li> <li>• Reports of low workloads</li> <li>• Staff working excessive hours</li> <li>• Staff not taking breaks</li> <li>• Frequent communications outside of work hours</li> <li>• Lack of engagement</li> <li>• Increased irritability/negativity</li> </ul>
<b>Low job control</b> occurs when staff have little to no say in the decisions and processes that affect them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Match tasks to staff with appropriate capability</li> <li>□ Self-reflect on what leaders are 'required' to approve (i.e., avoid 'micromanagement')</li> <li>□ Critically review of workflows to minimise non-productive work</li> <li>□ Seek feedback from team members relating to their level of job control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requiring approvals for routine/low-level tasks/emails</li> <li>• Disengagement from role/work</li> <li>• Delays in work getting done</li> <li>• Increase staff turnover</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b> is inadequate when team members do not have information, training, or resources to carry out their jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Make information clear and easy to access</li> <li>□ Encourage sharing of information, knowledge and skills within and between teams</li> <li>□ Review team training and seek feedback on needs</li> <li>□ Ensure appropriate staff coverage (e.g. back filling a role during extended period of absence)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members receiving conflicting instructions</li> <li>• Work does not get done properly and/or on time</li> <li>• Increased interpersonal frustration, tension or absenteeism</li> </ul>
<b>Role conflict</b> occurs when there is limited or inconsistent information about duties and responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Provide clarity on team roles and responsibility</li> <li>□ Adjust tasks and/or create clarity in response to feedback, queries or inconsistencies</li> <li>□ Provide rationale when assigning or altering work/roles</li> <li>□ Be vigilant of duplication or conflicts in different members work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members regularly seeking clarity</li> <li>• Differences in assigned or perceived priorities across the team</li> <li>• Increased anxiety, lower morale and engagement</li> <li>• Reduced productivity</li> </ul>
<b>Reward and recognition</b> can be harmful there is an imbalance between the work team members undertake and the acknowledgement they receive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Be fair and consistent when rewarding and/or recognising people</li> <li>□ Provide clear, fair and practical feedback</li> <li>□ Make sure all team members have access to career development activities</li> <li>□ Seek feedback from team members on reward and recognition</li> <li>□ Look for opportunities to diversity or adapt rewards (both formal and informal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members exhibit stress due to feeling undervalued</li> <li>• Decreased morale and motivation</li> <li>• Lack of innovation or creativity</li> </ul>
<b>Change management</b> can create significant anxiety when done poorly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Consult team members before making changes that will affect them (even if seemingly minor)</li> <li>□ Keep your team informed during periods of change</li> <li>□ Ensure support for your team during periods of change</li> <li>□ Acknowledge the potential difficulties people experience during periods of change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members regularly seeking clarity</li> <li>• Differences in assigned or perceived priorities across the team</li> <li>• Increased anxiety, lower morale and engagement</li> <li>• Reduced productivity</li> </ul>

Hazard	How leaders support this	Signs there are issues
<b>Organisational justice</b> can create cause harm when applied inconsistently or unfairly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Ensure policies and 'rules' are consistently and transparently applied</li> <li>□ Do not penalise staff for things they cannot control</li> <li>□ Involve all parties in decisions that affect them</li> <li>□ Create an accessible workplace for all team members (i.e., implementing reasonable adjustments)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased interpersonal frustration or tension</li> <li>• Loss of trust in leaders and the workplace generally</li> </ul>
<b>Remote/isolated work</b> can make people more susceptible to psychological injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Minimise requirements for remote/isolated work</li> <li>□ Ensure risk assessments and controls are in place</li> <li>□ Provide appropriate supervision</li> <li>□ Ensure remote/isolated workers have a connection to the rest of the team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited communication from team members who work remotely or travel frequently</li> <li>• Difficulty contacting team members</li> <li>• Lessening engagement from remote workers</li> </ul>
<b>Poor workplace relationships</b> can lead to psychological injury if this experience is severe, prolonged or frequent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Encourage your team members to discuss differing ideas constructively and provide platforms to do this</li> <li>□ Agree on rules for communication and behaviour</li> <li>□ Try to catch and resolve signs of relationship conflict early</li> <li>□ Educate yourself on recognising unacceptable behaviour and conflict resolution strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate behaviours between or directed toward individuals (e.g. offensive language; rumours)</li> <li>• Recurring/unresolved confrontations and/or disagreements</li> </ul>
Exposure to <b>Traumatic events/materials</b> can severely impact their mental or emotional well-being, this can represent a traumatic event for staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Modify tasks where possible to reduce the risk of exposure to high-risk situations</li> <li>□ Limit or protect access to potentially distressing or traumatic material (e.g. password protection or document flagging)</li> <li>□ Regularly promote access to mental health resources, such as employee assistance programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members have been exposed to or witnessed distressing events at work (e.g. fatality, accident)</li> <li>• Team members who are exposed to traumatic material (e.g. victim/survivor testimonies)</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental conditions</b> that are unpleasant or hazardous can lead to psychological or physical injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Look to eliminate poor conditions wherever possible (e.g. report maintenance and facility issues)</li> <li>□ Encourage hazard reporting in UQSafe</li> <li>□ Make sure your team members understand their obligations to support workplace cleanliness and safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive noise, unpleasant odours</li> <li>• Exposure to chemical or biological hazards (e.g. in offices)</li> <li>• Poor air or water quality</li> </ul>

### Bullying, harassment, violence and aggression

- Set a zero tolerance policy
- Make sure your team understands expected standards of behaviour
- Empower team members to stand up to poor behaviour
- Make sure your team has the means to seek help
- Take disclosures of bad behaviour seriously

**UQ has single point for complaints and appeals:**  
<https://www.uq.edu.au/complaints-appeals>

### Crisis Support

[Support for students](#)

[Support for staff](#)

### Building supervisor and leadership skills

[The UQ Leadership Framework](#)

[UQ Managers toolkit](#)

[Leadership Development at UQ](#)

### Sexual misconduct

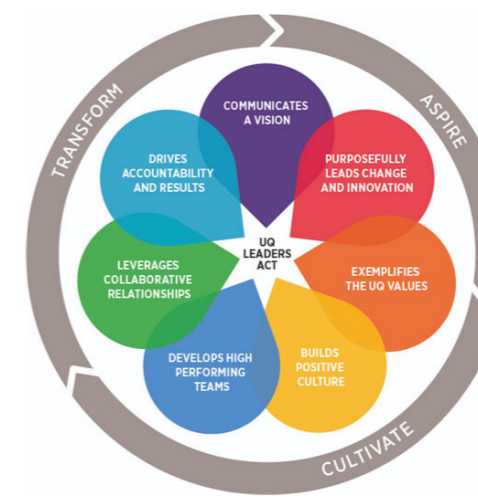
When someone experiences sexual assault or harassment, the people they choose to talk to about it play a vital role. Your role is to:

**Listen → Support → Refer**

*Reports of sexual misconduct must be kept confidential.*

Refer to:

- [UQ Respect](#)
- [Helping a survivor](#)
- [UQ Sexual Misconduct Support Unit](#) (support for survivors of sexual assault and harassment)



### Learning more about psychosocial hazards

#### Formal training & resources

- [UQ Resources](#)
- [Safe Work Code of Practice](#)
- Courses available in [WorkDay](#):
  - "Understanding and Managing Psychosocial Risk for Supervisors"
  - "Trauma Informed Practice"
  - "Understanding Vicarious Trauma"
  - "Disability inclusion Course"
  - "Mental Health Champions Introduction Session"

#### Experiential learning activities

- Reflect on each of the psychosocial hazards and how they relate to your team – involve your team
- Develop a formal psychosocial risk assessment and management plan for a particular role or task (seek support from your local Health, Safety and Wellness / HR team)
- Identify a process in your organisational unit and try to modify it to address a psychosocial hazard

#### Learning from others

- Shadow another supervisor (e.g. sit in on a team meeting or development conversation)