

Cognitive overload at work:

Organizational factor for workers with a Common Mental Disorder (CMD)

Interpretation:

Cognitive overload at work has a negative impact on return to work and can prolong the duration of absence of workers with a CMD.

Proposed measurement tool (★★★):

« Mental load » subscale (4 items) of the Questionnaire on the Experience and Assessment of Work (QEAW), adapted by Lequeurre et al. (2013).

Caution:

This factor can only be evaluated by accredited professionals. Venturing into the evaluation of this factor is therefore prohibited. If you suspect that this factor may be involved, you must rely on the professionals in question. Self-administration or the administration of a questionnaire by an unqualified person may lead to undesirable consequences such as the calculation of erroneous scores and the misinterpretation of results that may result.

However, the elements (items or portion of interview) constituting this tool can provide additional information to other return to work actors or stakeholders, such as the actors from the organization (employer, human resources, supervisor, union representative, etc.). This allows for a better understanding of what the factor implies, which in turn can help to target some more specific elements or needs that would require (1) a possible intervention (using an accredited professional) or (2) adjustments of the organization, especially in terms of prevention.

« Mental load » subscale of the Questionnaire on the Experience and Assessment of Work (QEAW)

For each statement, please use the scale below to indicate how well it describes your work as you would experience (or feel) it these days, given your current health condition.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Never
Sometimes
Always

	Never			Sometimes			Always
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Does your work would demand a lot of concentration?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Does your work would require continual thought?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Would you have to give continuous attention to your work?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Does your work would require a great deal of carefulness?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

→ Final score (mean of 4 items): / 7 (possible range: 1 – 7)

Scoring instructions

To calculate the mean score of the questionnaire, sum the scores to the statements, then divide by 4 to get the mean. The final score can then vary between 1 and 7.

Interpretation of scores

A higher score would mean cognitive overload at work, which would potentially have a negative impact on RTW. Although there are no studies demonstrating the predictive value of RTW for this questionnaire, our research team would recommend intervention if the mean score is ≥ 5 .