

Stress Management Policy

January 2014

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Version Control History

Version Number	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions Made
1.0	January 2014	Published version has new title of Vice Principal, HR and Communications.
1.1	August 2016	Footer updated to reflect new template model.
1.2	December 2018	Change of role to Quality Manager and other job title changes to adhere with new structure.

UNCONTROLLED WHEN PRINTED

Stress Management Policy

1 Purpose

Perth College UHI acknowledges its responsibilities and duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and accompanying legislation, to protect the mental health and wellbeing of its employees, and recognises that stress can be a risk to both physical and mental health.

The purpose of this policy is to set out how the College will identify and manage work related stress.

2 Scope

This policy covers all Perth College UHI staff.

3 Definitions

3.1 What is Work-related Stress?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".

Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep workers and managers motivated. It is **excessive** or **uncontrolled** pressure which can lead to stress which undermines performance, is costly to employers and above all can make people ill. Stress is therefore a response to excessive pressure. To some degree pressure can be beneficial, when it inspires motivation and commitment, but excessive pressure becomes stress which is harmful and can lead to illness.

What triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person. Individuals react in different ways to similar situations.

Work related stress occurs where people perceive they cannot cope with the demands within the workplace.

3.1.1 Stress and its Effects

Stress is not an illness but, if experienced for a prolonged period the effects can lead to physical symptoms of ill health, such as heart disease, susceptibility to frequent minor illness as well as longer term psychological damage such as anxiety and depression. Developing coping strategies such as taking exercise and finding ways of relaxing can help combat the effects of stress. Regrettably people experiencing stress often adopt negative coping strategies such as drinking too much alcohol and caffeine, skipping meals and smoking, all of which can compound the problem.

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Many of the early outward signs of stress will be noticeable to Managers and work colleagues and should alert those with control and responsibility for workplaces to problems within individuals. They include:

- Changes in behaviour.
- Unusual tearfulness, irritability or aggression.
- Indecisiveness.
- Increased sickness absence.
- Poor timekeeping.
- Reduced performance, eg inability to concentrate.
- Overworking or failure to delegate.
- Erosion of self-confidence.
- Relationship problems, eg becoming withdrawn or argumentative.
- Increased unwillingness to co-operate or accept advice.
- Excessive smoking or drinking.
- Drug abuse.

The sufferer may also complain of or demonstrate symptoms of:

- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Panic attacks.
- Headaches.
- Raised blood pressure.
- Indigestion.
- Muscle tension.
- Increased heart rate.

At an organisational level, stress can result in deterioration of morale, performance and staff turnover. Sickness absence due to stress can cause a domino effect where increased workload due to sickness absence of a colleague can in turn lead to increased workload pressures and stress in other members of the team.

Sickness absences as a result of work related stress will be managed through the College's Sickness Absence Procedure.

3.1.2 Personal Life

The impact of pressures within an employee's personal life cannot be ignored. Whilst the employer cannot be held directly responsible for them, these factors play an integral part in work performance.

Work-stresses go home with the worker. Home-stresses come to work with the worker.

Grieving, divorce, family upset, moving home, serious family illnesses, pregnancy, miscarriage and other very personal factors all affect a person's ability to perform to expectation.

Good employers and managers will recognise this and take appropriate supportive action.

4 Key Principles

- 4.1 The College recognises that work related stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

The risk of work related stress (WRS) will be treated in the same way as any other workplace health hazard and the College will assess the risk to mental health and wellbeing as appropriate by:

- Identifying all workplace stressors and conducting risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from work related stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
 - Providing training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
 - Consulting with Trade Union Safety Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of work related stress.
 - Making available confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
 - Using the services of our Occupational Health Service to assist in the management of work related stress as appropriate.
 - Providing adequate and appropriate resources to enable Managers to implement this policy.
 - Treating cases with the utmost confidentiality, related documentation being subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act (DPA).
 - Conduct Wellbeing and Staff Surveys to identify stressors in the workplace.
- 4.2 Work related stress that arises as a result of a staff member having a protected characteristic has additional protection within the College Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 4.3 HSE Management Standards will act as a benchmark and drive improvement actions on reducing work related stress.
- 4.4 Although specific staff and roles have been assigned responsibilities under this policy, a proactive approach by all will mitigate the occurrence of potential harmful levels of work related stress.

5 Responsibilities

The organisational structure for the implementation and management of the College's statutory health and safety duties is described in detail in the Health and Safety Policy.

General duties for managing work related stress remain the same, but additional or specific duties relating to this policy are detailed below.

5.1 Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

It is the responsibility of the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development to review and update this Policy.

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5.2 Managers

It is the responsibility of College Managers to:

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their area of responsibility with support from the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Advisor.
- Ensure good communications between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested and required in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work eg bereavement or separation.
- Ensure actions arising from Wellbeing and Staff Surveys to address work related stressors and the HSE Management Standards are addressed.
- Ensure staff returning to work after long-term sickness absence are appropriately supported on a phased-return basis.

5.3 Human Resources

It is the responsibility of Human Resources staff to:

- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address work related stress by collating anonymous statistics on the following:
 - Sickness absence data – clusters, trends, irregular attendance, diagnosis of stress.
 - Staff turnover.
 - Grievance cases
 - Harassment cases.
 - Occupational Health referrals including the percentage of work related referrals.
 - Accidents at work.
 - Professional Reviews.
 - Return to work interviews.
 - Exit interviews.
- Advise Managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to Managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to the occupational health service or confidential counsellors where appropriate.
- Conduct Wellbeing and Staff Surveys to identify stressors in the workplace and meet HSE Management Standards and ensure Managers take appropriate actions to address the issues.

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5.4 Employees

It is the responsibility of each employee to:

- Seek assistance as early as possible if she or he is manifesting symptoms of stress.
- Raise issues of concern with their Line Manager or Human Resources staff. The available support mechanisms are particularly relevant should an individual feel that their Line Manager is connected to the stress they are experiencing.
- Accept opportunities for counselling or occupational health advice when recommended.
- Show dignity and respect for others within the workplace at all times.
- Make use of any training available.
- Seek support from their Trade Union Representative as required.

5.5 Quality approval check of this Policy is the responsibility of the Quality Manager who will arrange for the Policy to be posted on the web.

6 Linked Policies/Related Documents

Health and Safety Policy

Dignity in the College – Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure

Equality and Diversity Policy

Staff Complaints and Grievance Procedure

Sickness Absence Procedure

Continuous Professional Development Strategy, Policy and Procedure

Risk Assessment Procedure

Data Protection Policy

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

Capability Procedure

7 Relevant Legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Equality Act 2010

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