

UHI | PERTH

Stress Management Policy

UHI Perth is a registered Scottish charity, number SC021209.

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.
1.3	April 2020	Change of footer to reflect version status, change of owner, lead author, lead editor and next review date.
1.4	June 2023	Review of document with amendments throughout following comments from the Stress Management Group.

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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 UHI Perth will identify and manage work related stress.

2 Scope

This policy covers all UHI Perth staff.

3 Definitions

Below are some definitions of key words found in this policy:

Stress – the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.

Stressor – an activity, event, or other stimulus that causes stress.

Risk assessment – a systematic process of identifying hazards and evaluating any associated risks within a workplace, then implementing reasonable control measures to remove or reduce them.

Control measure – any measure taken to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury or harm, both physical and psychological.

Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Management Standards – these define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risk from work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. They cover the primary sources of stress at work – demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. The Management Standards represent a set of conditions that if present, reflect a high level of health, wellbeing and organisational performance.

3.1 What is Work-related Stress?

Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep workers and managers motivated. 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. 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.

Work related stress occurs where people perceive they cannot cope with the demands within the workplace. What triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person. Individuals react in different ways to similar situations.

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.

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 Aims and 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 College aims to prevent, or where this is not possible, reduce to as low a level as is reasonably practicable, stress in the workplace.

The College will ensure that it addresses stress by:

- Acknowledging the existence and effect of work-related stress on individuals and departments/teams.
- Providing working conditions which enable employees to carry out their duties safely and effectively.
- Identifying all workplace stressors and managing the process through conducting stress risk assessments. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- Reducing any stigma associated with the disclosure of stress by creating a positive climate for tackling the issues surrounding stress at work.
- Informing all staff how to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress, the key stressors and the actions that can be taken to alleviate stress.
- 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 of stress with the utmost confidentiality, related documentation being subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act (DPA).
- Conducting Wellbeing and Staff Surveys to identify stressors in the workplace.
- Promoting open communication, participation and encouragement.
- Monitoring and auditing the arrangements for stress in the workplace.
- Providing helpful resources and helping managers and staff manage stress.
- Supporting staff to promote personal effectiveness and to take positive action to deal with stress.
- Monitors absences caused by work related stress and reports on this to relevant Committees to inform further policy development.
- Supporting staff who return to work following absence due to stress.

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.

5.2 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.
- Always show dignity and respect for others within the workplace.
- Make use of any training available.
- Seek support from their Trade Union Representative as required.

5.3 Managers

Managers have a critical role in minimising and managing stress risks, in offering support to employees and in facilitating support from elsewhere as necessary.

Managers will receive relevant training to give them the skills and knowledge to be able to implement the policy, however, they are not expected to take on the role of counsellor.

Managers will be expected to use good communication skills in their tackling of stress-related issues and to be consistent in their approach to stress-related absence.

It is the responsibility of 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 employees 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 Stress Management Group

The Stress Management Group are a Sub-Group of the Health and Safety Committee with a sole focus on the management of Stress.

Their role and duties include:

- Overseeing and facilitating the implementation of the Health and Safety Executive Stress Management Standards.
- Formulation and delivery of a Stress Action Plan including the identification of resources required and timetable for actions.
- Reviewing progress of the Stress Action Plan and reporting to the Health and Safety Committee
- Ensuring appropriate communication to all staff, in a timely fashion, of the aims and activities of the Group.
- Reviewing the College's approach to the Management of Stress and to make recommendations to the Health and Safety Committee
- Informing staff through various communication mediums and actions to provide evidence of the work of the group.

5.6 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
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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