Stress Management Policy

ELT manager	Lydia Rohmer, Principal and Chief Executive
Responsible officer	Head of HR & Organisational Development
Date first approved by BoM	13 December 2010
Date review approved by BoM	27 March 2020
Next Review Date	January 2023
Equality impact assessment	January 2020
Further information (where relevant)	

Reviewer	Date	Review Action/Impact	BoM
V Ferguson	January 2020	Additional linked policies, Clause 8 and additional legislation, Clause 9	

Contents

1.0 Purpose

West Highland College UHI is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for its staff and recognises the importance of fostering psychological as well as physical well-being.

This commitment arises from the College's duty of care to all its staff, and more generally the recognition that a safe and healthy working environment contributes to the motivation, job satisfaction, performance and creativity of staff.

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

2.0 Scope

The policy covers all West Highland College UHI staff.

3.0 Definition of 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.

The HSE has identified six key "Management Standards" that represent a set of conditions that reflect high levels of health, well-being, and organisational performance. These management standards provide a practical framework which organisations can use to minimise the impact of work-related stress. The Management Standards are given in full here and summarised below:

HSE Management Standard	
Demands	Staff are able to cope with the demands of the job
Control	Staff are able to have a say about the way work is done
Support	Staff receive adequate information and support from colleagues and superiors
Relationships	Staff are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying or harassment at work
Roles	Staff understand their role and responsibilities
Change	Staff are involved in and consulted about any organisational changes

The *Individual Risk Assessment Tool* and associated guidance is based on the HSE management standards and is intended to provide managers and staff with guidance   on the practical steps they can take to identify and address potential sources of   workplace stress. These standards should be considered in all strategic or work   activities whether at College or departmental level.

4.1   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.

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. Signs may include:

- Changes in behaviour.
- Unusual tearfulness, irritability or aggression.
- Indecisiveness.
- Increased sickness absence.
- Poor timekeeping.
- Reduced performance, e.g. inability to concentrate.
- Overworking or failure to delegate.
- Erosion of self-confidence.
- Relationship problems, e.g. 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 increase 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.

The impact of pressures within a staff member'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 may go home with the staff member. Home-stresses may come to work with the member of staff. 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.

5.1   Key principles

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.
- Providing training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- 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).

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.

HSE Management Standards will act as a benchmark and drive improvement actions on reducing work related stress.

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.

6.1   Responsibilities

The organisational structure, roles and responsibilities 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:

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 Estates & Facilities Manager who has responsibility for Health & Safety.
- 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 required in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that inappropriate behaviour, bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Ensure staff returning to work after long-term sickness absence are appropriately supported.

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
- Occupational Health referrals
- 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 Counselling service where appropriate.

Staff - it is the responsibility of each employee to:

- Raise issues of concern with their line manager or Human Resources staff.
- 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 assistance as early as possible if they are manifesting symptoms of stress.

7.0   Individual Cases

In order to address individual cases of work-related stress where they arise, managers should seek information from the individual as to the contributory factors perceived by the staff member and possible remedies.

The early detection of individuals experiencing related health difficulties is vital,

and managers and individuals are encouraged to seek advice and assistance at as early a stage as possible and seek advice from Human Resources and/or Occupational Health (via HR).

When it is identified that a staff member is suffering from work-related stress their manager should complete an *"Individual Stress Identification Tool".* Please refer to the associated guidelines *"Management Guidance for completing the Individual Stress Identification Tool".*

8.0   Linked Policies/Related Documents

Individual Risk Identification Tool
Management Guidance for the completing the Individual Stress Identification Tool Health and Safety Policy
Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity Policy
Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
Risk Assessment Procedure
Data Protection Policy
Dignity at Work
Drug & Alcohol Policy
Flexible Working

9.0   Relevant Legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Equality Act 2010
 The Protection from Harassment Act 1997