

Stress Management Policy

WHC reserves the right to amend this policy at its discretion. The most up-to-date version can be downloaded from our website.



University of the
Highlands and Islands
West Highland College

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean
Colaiste na Gàidhealtachd an Iar

Stress Management Policy

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Responsible officer	HR Manager
Date first approved by BoM	13 December 2010
Date review approved by BoM	28 June 2017
Next Review Date	January 2020
Equality impact assessment	17 July 2017
Further information (where relevant)	

Reviewer	Date	Review Action/Impact	BoM

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1.0 Purpose

West Highland College UHI is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for its staff and recognizes 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

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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.

4.0 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.

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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.

5.0 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.

6.0 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:

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- 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 as early as possible.

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a stage as possible where it is felt there would be beneficial, 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 and Diversity Policy
Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
Risk Assessment Procedure
Data Protection Policy
Capability Procedure (to follow)

9.0 Relevant Legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Equality Act 2010

Management guidance for completing the Individual Stress Identification Tool

Introduction

Stress is the way that we react mentally, physically or emotionally to changes and demands in our lives. A certain amount of stress in life is good as it can keep us motivated and focused. Too much stress however, can detract from this and lead to ill health and reduced work performance.

The College's Stress Management Policy has adopted the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) definition of stress as well as incorporating the six management standards used by the HSE which cover the primary sources of stress at work:

Demands: workload, work patterns, and the work environment

Control: how much say you have in the way you do your work

Support: encouragement and resources available through the organisation, line management and colleagues

Relationships: avoidance of conflict and promotion of positive working

Role: understanding of role within the organisation

Change: management and communication of change

Individual Stress Risk Identification Tool

The Individual Stress Identification Tool has been developed using the HSE's six management standards to give managers preliminary guidance on how to assist staff who believe that they are experiencing work stress. An action plan to control the perceived negative stressors at work can then be developed.

As a manager you have a legal responsibility to support staff in finding ways to reduce the causes of work stress. Support and further guidance for this can be obtained from your HR Department.

Process

1. Once a manager has identified that an individual is suffering with symptoms of stress they should make time to discuss the perceived cause of their stress with the staff member. This should establish whether it is related to work or non-work issues.
2. If stressors are easily identified and can be resolved then a formal assessment of the stressors may not be necessary. The stress identification tool can be helpful in honing down the precise cause so targeted control measures can be implemented.

3. If an individual has been off with work associated stress ill health or if the stressors are complex a stress identification tool should be completed.
4. This should usually be completed with the manager and staff member and an action plan generated. If either party do not feel that it is appropriate, advice should be sought from the HR Department.
5. The individual stress identification tool should then be kept in the individual's HR file and, where relevant, a copy forwarded to Occupational Health to be kept in their health record.
6. Suggested actions should be documented on the form and the effects monitored and revised as indicated.



Confidential
Individual Stress Identification Tool

Name Job Title Manager.....

Location Dept Contact No

<i>Job Demands</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Workload					
Competency					
Work patterns					
Physical environment					

<i>Relationships</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Demands are made from more than one person with conflicting deadlines					
Relationships or interaction with others					
Inappropriate behaviour, bullying or sexual harassment					
Discrimination					
Violence at work					

<i>Role</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Conflicting job demands					
Confusion about how their role fits with others					
Confusion about how job fits in to overall Departmental /College aims					

<i>Support</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Feeling of lack of support from managers and colleagues					
Work / life balance					
<i>Capability</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Feeling that you are being asked to complete work outside of your capability.					

<i>Control</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Pressure to succeed					
Input into work processes					
High demand					

<i>Change</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>
Uncertainty about plans and occurrences					
Poor communication					
Fear about job security					
Lack of consultation and arena to comment					

<i>Training</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager's Guidance</i>	<i>Further Action</i>

Completed by:

Staff member Signature Date

Manager Signature Date

Action Notes

- Counselling Service details given - Y/N
- Occupational Health Referral completed - Y/N
- HR Manager contacted - Y/N
- Copy to HR File
- Copy to staff member
- Other :

Review date:.....