



WELLBEING POLICY

Woolwich Polytechnic School

PolyMAT

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Introduction

This policy applies to employees of the School only. It does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have any contractual effect. The School reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

The School is committed to protecting the health, safety and well-being and of all those who work for us and endeavour to maintain a working environment in which everyone treats one another with dignity and respect and is able to co-operate with and trust their colleagues.

The School recognises that, whatever its source, stress can be a health and safety issue in the workplace and acknowledges the importance of a supportive environment and working culture and of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

The School is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to bring it to everyone's attention. However, this policy can only be effective if everyone co-operates to achieve its aims.

What is stress – A Definition?

Stress is the adverse reaction experienced in response to excessive pressures or demands. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.

There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress.

Pressures outside the workplace (whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries) can result in stress. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.

The School recognises that what triggers stress, and the capacity to deal with stress, varies from person to person. Individuals react to similar situations in different ways.

The School's obligations

The School has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Who is covered by the policy?

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including Head Teachers, Heads of Department, members of the Senior Leadership Team, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff (collectively referred to as "Staff" in this policy).

Scope and purpose of the policy

The School is committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work-related stress and to providing appropriate support and consideration to Staff suffering from stress, on a confidential basis where appropriate including:

- Promoting a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement;
- Through training, effective planning and allocation of workloads and ensuring feedback is provided on performance, we want Staff to develop their skills and confidence and to feel able to raise any concerns they have about their work or working environment;
- Using Staff development, Staff support systems and policies reflecting current good practice to help Staff understand and recognise the causes of stress and to address work-related stress and the impact of external stressors at work;
- Providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation;
- Addressing violence, aggression and other forms of inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action;
- Ensuring risk assessments include or specifically address workplace stress;
- Maintaining an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure;
- Facilitating requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy;
- Following comprehensive change management procedures;

- Providing support and services, such as occupational health and an employee assistance scheme, for Staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

Recognition of stress as a genuine problem requires management support and action. Those working at management and supervisory level have a specific responsibility to:

- Participate in the culture of open communication and encouragement;
- ensure that the Staff they manage receive training;
- effectively plan and allocate workloads and provide feedback on performance;
- Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary;
- Ensure that the Staff they manage understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.

To facilitate this process, your Line Manager/Head of Department, and the Senior Leadership Team will be given training on best practice and are encouraged to seek advice from the Head Teachers on how to recognise stress in the Staff that they manage in the first instance.

However, all members of Staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives;
- Plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives;
- Speak to their Line Manager/Head of Department if they experience or are aware of a situation that may lead to a stress problem.
- Co-operate with support, advice and guidance they may be offered by their Line Manager/Head of Department.

The Head Teachers will have responsibility for informing all Staff of this policy and their role in its implementation.

Sources of support

The School is able to assist Staff who may be suffering from stress in the following ways:

- Training on stress management. We can run training sessions and/or workshops from time to time to assist Staff in recognising and coping with stress.
- A confidential helpline manned by independent advisers with access to specialist counsellors. The helpline provides help with physical, mental and social issues and

is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The helpline number is 0800 243 458 or email assistance@workplaceoptions.com

Line Managers/Heads of Department should support Staff suffering from stress.

Resolving cases of stress at work

If you believe you are suffering from stress you should discuss this with your Line Manager/Head of Department. If you feel unable to do so you should contact the Head Teachers or a member of the School's Senior Leadership Team.

Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of one of the above, steps will be taken by the School to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

- A workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload or possible redeployment;
- Where appropriate, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance policies and procedures;
- Referral for medical advice and/or a medical report to be provided by the Occupational Health Department and or the GP (and any medical specialist) treating the member of staff concerned;
- If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme.

The Occupational Health Department will continue to be used appropriately to help Staff overcome problems associated with work-related stress as well as other stress and the impact that has on their ability to do their duties.

Absence due to stress

If you are absent due to stress you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in our Sickness Absence Policy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required, whether they are suffering from stress, supporting a colleague who is suffering from stress or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure dealing with stress.

Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

However, there are occasions when matters reported by a member of staff suffering from stress may have to be put to third parties. For example, where duties need to be reallocated within a team or where, as the result of reported bullying or misconduct, a disciplinary investigation and/or proceedings take place. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

The School will monitor the development and dissemination of good practice, the recognition of the symptoms of stress, awareness of and effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Business Manager in the first instance.