Psychosocial Risk Management Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This procedure sets out processes and responsibilities for:

a. systematically identifying, minimising and managing psychosocial hazards arising from University activities
b. supporting workers, supervisors/managers, and other relevant parties to reasonably address, manage and control workplace factors and hazards to maintain a psychosocially safe and healthy workplace for all
c. creating a psychologically safe workplace where discrimination, harassment, and intimidation are not tolerated and inclusive organisational culture is maintained.

(2) This procedure provides the process and guidance for Charles Sturt University (the University) to identify and manage psychosocial hazards and ensures compliance with:

a. Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
b. Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work 2021 (NSW)
c. other relevant Australian state and territory legislation and codes of practice.

Scope

(3) This policy applies:

a. to all workers, managers and supervisors, contractors and other relevant parties
b. across all University campuses and sites, as well as work-related activities that are conducted elsewhere.

(4) This procedure does not outline:

a. direction on all primary prevention responses with respect to psychosocial hazards relating (but not limited) to gender-based violence and sexual violence, or reporting requirements and mechanisms that align with the University's approach to trauma-informed and person-centred disclosures and reporting – contact Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing or Division of People and Culture for advice on these matters
b. long-term management of psychological injury or disability – see the Injury Management and Return to Work Program Procedure and Workplace Adjustment Procedure, or
c. process or advice for the immediate management of a mental health crisis situation – see the Employee Assistance Program critical incident support service.

Section 2 - Policy

(5) This procedure supports the:

a. Employment Conditions Policy (in development)
b. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
c. Code of Conduct

Section 3 - Procedure

Part A - University leadership and commitment

(6) The University is committed to fostering a healthy, safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all members of our University community.

(7) This procedure outlines the University's commitment to creating a psychologically healthy and safe environment where discrimination, intimidation and harassment are not tolerated, where psychosocial hazards are systematically identified and minimised, and a positive and inclusive organisational culture is fostered and maintained.

(8) The University accepts and is committed to its responsibilities to provide and maintain a psychosocially healthy and safe environment for all stakeholders identified in the scope of this policy. In turn, the University expects all stakeholders to take reasonable care of their personal psychosocial health and safety and that of others by adhering to all relevant policies and procedures.

Part B - Psychosocial hazards and risks

(9) Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response and could lead to psychological or physical harm and injury. These hazards can stem from:

a. the way tasks or jobs are designed, organised, managed and supervised
b. tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks
c. the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments
d. social and/or cultural factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

(10) Psychosocial hazards include (but are not limited to):

a. high or low job demands
b. exposure to traumatic events or material
c. role conflict
d. lack of role clarity
e. low job control
f. conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions
g. poor support
h. workplace violence and aggression
i. bullying
j. harassment, including sexual and gender-based harassment
k. inadequate reward and recognition
l. hazardous physical environment
m. remote or isolated work
n. poor organisational justice
o. poor physical environment
p. poor organisational change management.

Part C - Managing psychosocial hazards and risks

(11) The University's executive leaders, managers and supervisors will manage psychosocial risk in accordance with WHS Regulations. This includes:

a. identifying hazards
b. eliminating or minimising risk
c. maintaining and reviewing control measures.

Identifying psychosocial hazards

(12) Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to identify reasonably foreseeable psychosocial hazards in the work area that could risk the health and safety of workers.

(13) Managers and supervisors must consult with workers and Health and Safety Representatives (if applicable) when identifying psychosocial hazards.

(14) Psychosocial hazards can be identified through a combination of:

a. organisational climate surveys and other surveys of worker satisfaction (such as the People at Work psychosocial risk assessment and survey tool and the Psychosocial Hazard Work Re-Design Tool – PHReD-T)
b. regular worksite safety inspections that involve discussion and consultation with workers
c. planned or unplanned changes to work conditions (e.g. organisational change, unexpected workload changes)
d. observations of worker behaviour and workplace interactions
e. leave patterns and turnover
f. discussions with workers (e.g. team meetings and individual discussions)
g. complaints and grievances from workers
h. incidents and injury data/reports
i. issues raised at Health and Safety Committee meetings.

Reporting psychosocial hazards and incidents

(15) All workers have a responsibility for contributing to and maintaining a physically and psychosocially safe workplace ensuring reasonable care for the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves and others. This includes psychosocial and any other hazards and incidents.

(16) All psychosocial hazards and incidents must be reported via the Incident and Risk Management System, which is monitored by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team (see also the WHS Procedure - Risk and Hazard Management).

(17) Workers should raise concerns with their immediate supervisor, or if this is not possible, they should raise the concern with the appropriate representative from either:

a. Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing
b. Division of People and Culture
c. Health and Safety Representative (HSR).

(18) All incidents will be managed according to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Procedure - Incident Reporting and Investigation.

(19) Incidents that detail allegations of bullying, harassment, worker misconduct or other inappropriate behaviour will

be escalated to the Division of People and Culture for review and investigation under the Complaints Management Policy and Complaints Procedure - Workplace, in compliance with the University's obligations and duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Fair Work Act 2009.

Assessing psychosocial hazards and risks

(20) Where a psychosocial hazard is identified, the relevant senior leader or officer (e.g. directors, heads of school, deans and other senior managers) must assess the level of risk the identified hazard may present.

(21) A risk assessment (such as the People at Work psychosocial risk assessment and survey tool and the Psychosocial Hazard Work Re-Design Tool – PHReD-T) should be completed with the senior leader and impacted worker(s) to ensure suitable control measures are identified and implemented. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing team and relevant Health and Safety Representatives can offer support to complete this assessment.

(22) For each hazard, the risk assessment should:

a. identify whether the hazard is likely to result in a psychologically unsafe environment or psychological injury, including the frequency and duration of exposure
b. identify which workers are most at risk of exposure to the hazard
c. the consequence if exposure occurs
d. the likely outcomes for workers from exposure to hazards
e. determine the risk control measure(s) to implement, and
f. review the effectiveness of existing and new or additional control measures.

(23) Each organisational unit is responsible for carrying out psychosocial risk assessments periodically to proactively identify and assess potential risk of harm and workers that may be affected.

(24) A written record of the risk assessment must be kept by both the relevant organisational unit and the Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing. Psychosocial risks assessment resources and templates can be found on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing website.

Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards

(25) Under the WHS Act, managers and leaders have a duty to ensure health and safety and must either:

a. eliminate risks to health and safety, including psychosocial hazards, so far as reasonably practicable
b. where it is not reasonably practicable, minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable, or
c. ensure that the University and its management comply with due diligence in its duties.

(26) The Health, Safety and Wellbeing website provides further details on managing psychosocial risks:

a. A combination of control measures may be used to minimise risk if a single control is not sufficient to eliminate or minimise psychosocial risk.
b. Control measures implemented to minimise the identified psychosocial hazard should be recorded in the written risk assessment.

Maintaining and reviewing control measures

(27) Managers must review and maintain implemented control measures to ensure they remain effective over time. This includes ensuring control measures are:

a. fit for purpose

b. suitable for the nature and duration of the work
c. implemented or set up, and
d. adopted, followed and used correctly.

Section 4 - Guidelines and other resources

(28) Examples of psychosocial hazards can be found in Appendix A and additional resources are listed in Appendix B.

Section 5 - Glossary

(29) In this procedure:

a. Distress – means a negative feeling that people may experience (e.g. frustration, worry, anxiety etc)
b. Hazard – means a situation that has the potential to harm the health and safety of people or to damage property.
c. Psychosocial hazard – means aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response, psychological or physical harm. See Appendix A for examples.
d. Psychosocial risk – means a risk to the health and safety of a person arising from a psychosocial hazard.
e. Psychological injury – means instances where the experience of stress or exposure to a psychological hazard leads to impaired functioning, symptoms or ill health.
f. Psychological safety - means a work environment in which employees feel safe to express themselves and take risks without fear of negative consequences such as humiliation, punishment or discrimination.
g. Risk – means the possibility that harm (injury, illness or death) might occur when exposed to a hazard.
h. Stress – means when an individual's capacity to cope is exceeded by the demands placed on them. Prolonged or extreme stress can lead to a psychological injury.
i. Work related activities – means any type of activity directly related to the job which an employee participates in such as work meetings and training days.
j. Worker – is broadly defined to mean a person who carries out work in any capacity for a business or undertaking and includes employees, outworkers, apprentices, trainees, students gaining work experience, volunteers, contractors or subcontractors and their employees.

Section 6 - Document Context

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