

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Stress and Stress Management

CODE D10Y 12

COURSE Mental Health Care (Higher)

SUMMARY

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to identify causes and symptoms of stress. It will also enable them to investigate ways of managing stress once it has been identified in an individual.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Identify causal factors of the stress reaction.
- 2 Describe the effects of stress.
- 3 Describe how the stressed individual affects others.
- 4 Investigate healthy and unhealthy ways of managing stress.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally benefit from having some knowledge and understanding of mental health issues. Candidates would also benefit from having attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ D11H 11 Mental Health Issues: An Introduction (Intermediate 2)
- ◆ D8XT 11 Social Influences on Health (Intermediate 2)

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Administrative Information

Superclass: AF

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Stress and Stress Management

CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components in this Unit.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Stress and Stress Management

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Identify causal factors of the stress reaction.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The definition of stress is consistent with current theories.
- (b) The description of the models of stress is accurate.
- (c) The role of external factors in the development of stress reactions are clear.
- (d) The role of internal factors in the development of the symptoms of stress are clear.

OUTCOME 2

Describe the effects of stress.

Performance Criteria

- (a) The description of the physical signs and symptoms of the stress reaction are clear and concise.
- (b) The description of the psychological effects of the stress reaction are consistent with current theories.
- (c) The description of the emotional effects of the stress reaction are accurate.
- (d) The description of how the individual's social behaviour may alter as a result of being stressed is clear.

OUTCOME 3

Describe how the stressed individual affects others.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Description of the possible effects which the stressed individual has on other family members is clear.
- (b) Description of how stress in the individual affects his/her work performance is consistent with current theories.
- (c) Description of the way the stressed individual is likely to affect other parties in the community is clear.

OUTCOME 4

Investigate healthy and unhealthy ways of managing stress.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Performance Criteria

- (a) Identification of healthy ways of effectively managing stress in the individual are accurate.
- (b) Identification of unhealthy ways of managing stress in the individual are accurate.
- (c) Description of the effects of unhealthy ways of coping with stress is consistent with current theories.
- (d) Evaluation of the outcome of one healthy technique, used by the candidate, to manage stress is clear and concise.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Written and/or oral evidence is required to demonstrate that the candidate has achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria. A holistic approach to assessment across outcomes should be taken. This should include a demonstration of a relaxation technique as evidence of learning. Candidates are encouraged to investigate numerous relaxation approaches, and a self report of successful relaxation techniques should be included in the folio.

Specific Advice:

Outcome 1 — Candidates should be assessed on external and internal factors.

Outcome 2 — Candidates should be assessed on physical, psychological, emotional and social effects.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Stress and Stress Management

This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

Outcome 1

The various models of stress could be explored, eg the elasticity model (stress and strain); the lay model; stress as a reaction. Stress as a reaction could be shown to arise in various situations, eg examinations, interviews. Class discussion could focus on potential stressful situations — why are some situations stressful for some people and not for others? External stressors should be considered from a wide range of social and environmental events which affect the individual. Social relationships as potential stressors might also be considered. Any form of physical or psychological threat or harm could be interpreted as a stressor, and interpretation of events could be seen in terms of a combination of the psycho-social stimulus, genetic predisposition and experience (learning). The introduction of the concept that stress levels are inversely proportionate to control, could be included.

Outcome 2

Candidates should consider the following effects:

Physical signs and symptoms:

- ◆ sympathetic arousal
- ◆ short term/long term fatigue
- ◆ hyperactivity
- ◆ loss of appetite

Psychological effects:

- ◆ mood
- ◆ temperament
- ◆ attitudes
- ◆ self-esteem
- ◆ perceived ability to cope
- ◆ helplessness

Emotional effects:

- ◆ appropriate
- ◆ inappropriate

Social behaviour:

- ◆ alterations in public behaviour
- ◆ aggression

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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The performance-arousal curve (Yerkes Dodson Law) could form the basis of explaining the effects of stress on performance, emphasising the theory that stress stimulates the individual, but too much is detrimental. The personality theories endorsing the biological basis of behaviour (Eysenck) provokes discussion about sensation seeking; introversion versus extraversion.

The physiological effects of stress could be explored, detailing the role of the autonomic nervous system as a survival mechanism, and the response of individual organs to danger. Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome illustrates the effects of prolonged stressors.

The effects of social stressors influence individuals' emotions, attitudes and behaviours, and these could be explored as examples of how people cope with stressful situations. Potential social stressors can be introduced as sources of group discussion.

Outcome 3

Candidates should consider the following key effects:

Effects on the family:

- ◆ self care
- ◆ responsibility
- ◆ coping
- ◆ control
- ◆ relationships

Work performance:

- ◆ concentration
- ◆ potential for endangering self or others
- ◆ reliability
- ◆ job security

Members of the community:

- ◆ social interaction
- ◆ sociability
- ◆ stability
- ◆ predictability

How the stress of an individual affects others can be explored in terms of behaviour of people suffering from stress. These concepts can be explored by considering how the relationships between the stressed individual and family members, colleagues at work, social acquaintances and friends are affected. Consideration could also be given to the stressed individual who lives alone and may not necessarily have much, if any contact with family members. Use of videos, case studies and/or visiting speakers who have suffered stress-related illnesses may be helpful in allowing candidates a better understanding of stress and so influence how they would react in certain circumstances.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Outcome 4

Candidates should be encouraged to consider the following:

Healthy stress management:

- ◆ mental control
- ◆ physical relaxation techniques

Coping strategies:

- ◆ healthy: short term; long term
- ◆ unhealthy: short term; long term

Effects of coping strategies:

- ◆ healthy: physical; psychological; social
- ◆ unhealthy: physical; psychological; social

Healthy ways of coping with stress include problem solving skills, analysing situations, time management, knowledge of own abilities, assessment of demands, etc. Exercises to assist the individual cope with stress should be carried out; deep breathing, relaxation, etc. The candidate is familiar with the signs and symptoms of stress to recognise them when they appear. Candidates should therefore be taught elementary techniques designed to control mind and body and so reduce stress.

Unhealthy ways of coping with stress include use of substances which affect cognitions, including the widespread use of alcohol, tranquilisers and narcotics. The emphasis of unhealthy coping should be on how individuals treat the *symptoms* of stress, but not the *causes*. The unhealthy behaviour patterns eventually lead to problems of their own. The long term effects of stress are ultimately detrimental to the psyche and the physical body, and are correlated with numerous medical and emotional disorders.

The contribution of Alternative Therapies in managing stress is encouraged, and candidates should not be restricted to medical and conventional solutions. Mystical and Eastern philosophies, and meditation techniques could be explored, as could any theory which attempts to change attitudes of individuals.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

In delivering the Unit there should be a balance between teacher/lecturer exposition and experiential learning. The Unit can be delivered using a variety of methods which allow the candidates to apply theory to given situations. Use can be made of role play, simulation exercises, case studies and candidate presentations.

The use of small groups would be advantageous to consider stimulus material in order to help candidates gain familiarity with the theories and concepts covered in the Unit. Stimulus material can be delivered from case studies, newspapers, videos, etc and from the candidates own experiences.

It is important that candidates are aware of the relevance of their studies within a care context.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Candidates should be encouraged to explore their own attitudes to stress and should examine a variety of ways to cope with stress.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates could compile a folio of notes which contains evidence which satisfies all Outcomes. Evidence of additional information on stress management, and anecdotes of the effects of stress from academic or popular publications is encouraged. Descriptions and programmes from recognised stress management courses may be included. There are many relaxation techniques, and various approaches might be pursued, and attempted by the candidate. A self report on the effectiveness of a relaxation technique should be included.

The following are suggested methods of assessment:

Outcome 1: A short answer test may be appropriate.

Outcome 2: The candidate could make up one or two case studies to show the physical, psychological, emotional and source effects on a person in a stressful situation.

Drawing from information in the folio, eg choose a client from the following:

- (a) a housewife and mother of three children aged between 9 months and 5 years.
- (b) a husband with three children who is unemployed.
- (c) a teenager has just discovered that she is pregnant (unplanned)
- (d) or a person from your own experience who has or is experiencing a stressful situation.

Outcome 3: The candidate could be presented with case studies and asked to describe:

- (a) the effects which the stressed individual has on others.
- (b) how it affects their work.
- (c) how other parties in the community are affected

Outcome 4: The candidate could compare and contrast two healthy ways of managing stress and demonstrate a technique as stated in the Unit.

CANDIDATES WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

This Unit Specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (SQA, 2004).