

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Stress Management

Unit code: DH3Y 35

Unit purpose: To enable candidates to understand the nature of stress and the causal factors which contribute to it as well as the ways in which stress can affect the individual and others. The Unit will also equip candidates with a range of different strategies for managing stress and identify helpful methods for doing so.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- ◆ Examine both the causal factors and the effects of stress on individuals and others.
- ◆ Examine strategies for managing stress.

Credit value: 0.5 HN Credit at SCQF level 8: (4 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**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.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills:

Candidates should have good communication skills, both written and oral. These can be evidenced either by the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications for example Higher English or a qualification equivalent to SCQF Level 5 or by the completion of a pre-course interview part of which could take the form of a written assignment. The skills to undertake this Unit could also be demonstrated through an employer's reference or the process of application and interview.

Core skills: There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

Candidates will have the opportunity to develop the following core skills:

Communication: will be evidenced and developed by candidates through a range of activities and assessment (written) as well as class and small group/plenary discussions (oral).

Working with Others: will be developed as certain activities will require candidates to collaborate with each other as well as colleagues in the candidate's workplace.

Problem Solving: will be developed as candidates identify and evaluate a range of different stress management strategies.

General information for centres (cont)

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

It could also be delivered as stand-alone and could be useful as part of a professional development programme.

Assessment: It is suggested that there is ONE assignment for this Unit, which candidates should be able to undertake in parts: each part relating to different aspects of knowledge and skills as detailed under each Outcome.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Examine both the causal factors and the effects of stress on individuals and others

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Definitions of stress
- ◆ Different models of stress
- ◆ Effects of stress on individuals and others
- ◆ Potential stressors and effects of stress in candidate's workplace

Outcome 2

Examine strategies for managing stress

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Helpful strategies for managing stress
- ◆ Unhelpful strategies for managing stress
- ◆ Effects of helpful strategies on individuals
- ◆ Effects of unhelpful strategies on individuals
- ◆ Appropriate strategies for managing stress in candidate's workplace

Evidence requirements for the Unit

All the outcomes for this Unit will be assessed through a single assessment, which will take the form of a written placement report with specific issues for the candidates to address.

The evidence generated must demonstrate that candidates:

- ◆ Can define stress in relation to current theories
- ◆ Understand the different models of stress
- ◆ Understand the link between personality type and stress
- ◆ Recognise the way in which external factors can cause stress to develop

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Stress Management

- ◆ Understand the role in which internal factors can cause stress to develop
- ◆ Recognise the potential causal factor of stress (factors) in the candidate's own workplace
- ◆ Can describe the physiological, psychological and behavioural effects of stress on the individual
- ◆ Can recognise the effects of stress on staff and other individuals within the candidate's own workplace
- ◆ Are aware of the links between individual, organisational and social sources of stress
- ◆ Can explore a range of helpful and unhelpful strategies for managing stress
- ◆ Understand the importance of formal and informal support systems in managing stress
- ◆ Identify the possible effects of helpful and unhelpful strategies for managing stress in both the short and long term
- ◆ Understand the differences between a medical approach to stress management and the contribution of alternative therapies
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of the candidate's own strategies for managing stress in the workplace

Assessment guidelines for the Unit

The written placement report prepared by the candidate will unfold over time and should address the issue of stress within the candidate's own workplace. It will be in parts and candidates will be required to display relevant knowledge and identify examples of workplace stressors and their effects on themselves and others. A definition of stress should be given by discussing at least one model of stress. The causal factors of stress and the effects of these (physiological, psychological and behavioural) should be explored. Candidates also need to examine both healthy and unhealthy stress management strategies within the workplace and evaluate at least one of their own personal strategies for managing stress.

The total for the whole assignment should be around 1500 words. Part 1 should cover a definition of stress with reference to one model of stress; part 2 should focus on the causal factors of stress; part 3 should look at the effects of stress on individuals whilst part 4 should cover strategies for managing stress and an appraisal of these.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DH3Y 35
Unit title:	Stress Management
Superclass category:	HB
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: 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 20 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is intended to equip candidates with knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to stress and stress management. The Unit is likely to form part of a group award which is primarily designed to provide candidates with professional knowledge and skills related to the occupational area. Due to the importance of the candidate making links with his or her workplace the Unit is likely to be delivered only when the candidate has developed a broader base that underpins practice in the occupational area concerned.

Outcome 1

Class discussion could focus on what 'stress' means with candidates working in small groups to define stress and identify different situations which cause stress. Discussion could take place around characters experiencing stress from popular television.

Different models of stress could be explored eg. fight or flight, elasticity model. The introduction of the concept that a degree of stress can be productive could be explored (The Yorke-Dodson Law).

Discussion could take place around the link between personality type and stress (type A and type B personalities) as well as the '3 C's' present within stress resistant personalities (control, commitment and challenge).

Discussion could focus on the different causal factors, or stressors, and these could include external stressors (such as social and environmental factors eg. poverty, discrimination) and internal ones (such as individual perception or life experience). The possible link between external and internal stressors could be highlighted. Life events causing stress (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) could be examined. 'Meeting the Stress Challenge' by Thomson, Murphy, Stradling, O'Neill (Dec 1998) could be useful reference.

The relationship between the three dimensions of stress (stressors, coping methods and support systems) could also be explored.

Consideration could be given to the different effects of stress on the individual. These could include physiological effects (sweating, trembling), psychological effects (anxiety) and behavioural effects (substance misuse, relationship problems). The effects of the individual's stress on other people could also be examined.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Stress Management

Candidates could be encouraged to reflect upon stressors within their own working environment (such as deadlines, the working environment) as well as the effects of these (increased anxiety, absenteeism).

Individual candidates could be encouraged to reflect upon effects of stress within the workplace on themselves and colleagues.

Candidates could be encouraged to keep a reflective journal or 'stress diary' to record examples of stressors and the effects of stress on themselves and their colleagues. Candidates could also be encouraged to collect newspaper and magazine articles relating to stress and stress management.

Outcome 2

Discussion could begin with candidates reflecting on personal strategies for dealing with stress. These could be divided into two broad headings – helpful or healthy techniques or unhelpful or unhealthy ones.

Helpful strategies could include increasing self-awareness in relation to stressors and stress reactions, analysing situations, developing appropriate problem solving skills.

A holistic approach to managing stress could be encouraged and the importance of making lifestyle changes to manage stress more effectively should be examined (smoking cessation, alcohol reduction, diet and exercise).

Strategies for managing stress in the workplace should also be explored eg. assertiveness training, time-management, delegation and supervision.

Exercises to decrease the impact of stress could be carried out in class eg. deep breathing, relaxation, visualisation.

The range of support systems for managing stress both within and outwith the workplace could be investigated. These could include formal support (work based support systems) and informal support (partners, friends, family, colleagues).

Unhelpful ways of coping with stress should be explored. Examples of these may include alcohol and solvent misuse, avoidance. The importance of maintaining a non-judgemental attitude towards individuals who use unhelpful strategies to cope with stress should also be emphasised.

Both helpful and unhelpful strategies should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness and such effects could be considered in the short and long term eg. tranquillisers may be beneficial in the short term but do not actually tackle the causes of stress in the long term.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Stress Management

The growing popularity of alternative therapies could also be explored. These could include yoga, mind, body and spirit publications, aromatherapy, meditation. Cultural or global comparisons could be made in relation to stressors and stress management eg. eastern philosophies versus western values.

Candidates could be encouraged to research a particular stress management technique to present to the class group thereby broadening their knowledge of a range of different techniques.

Guest speakers from agencies focussing on stress management or practitioners of alternative therapies could be utilised.

Some suggested references:

Cox, T (1978) *Stress*, London, Macmillan

Davidson, J (1997) *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Stress*, New York, Alpha

Donnellan, G (ed) (1997) *Stress*, Cambridge, Independence

Looker, T and Gregson, O (1997) *Managing Stress*, London, Hodder

Powell, T (1997) *Free Yourself from Harmful Stress*, UK, DK Publishing

Thompson, N, Murphy, M and Stradling, S (1998) *Meeting the Stress Challenge*, London, Russell House

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This information is contained within evidence requirements and support notes.

Open learning

This Unit could be developed for open learning mode of delivery.

For information on normal open learning arrangements, please refer to the SQA guide *Assessment and Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning* (SQA 2000).

Special needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements* (SQA, 2001).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Stress Management

Undertaking this Unit will give you a knowledge of issues relating to stress: definitions, causes and effects on individuals and others. It will also give you a knowledge of a range of different strategies for managing stress and these are broadly divided into helpful or healthy strategies and unhelpful or unhealthy ones.

You will be assessed by means of a written report relating to your workplace whereby you will need to demonstrate an understanding of a range of different causes of stress, or stressors, their effect on you and others and identify and evaluate techniques for stress management. To undertake this you will need to demonstrate effective communication skills.