

<b>OTAGO POLYTECHNIC MANAGEMENT POLICY</b>		<b>Number: MP0456.02a</b>
Title:	<b>Stress Prevention and Management</b>	
ITPNZ Standard:	<b>4 Staff Selection, Appraisal and Development</b>	
Chief Executive Approval:	Approval Date: <b>2 May 12</b>	Effective Date: <b>12 Sept 2016 (minor amend)</b>
Previous Policy Number	<b>n/a</b>	Review Date: <b>as required</b>
Contact Authority:	<b>Director: Organisational Development</b>	Status: <b>Current</b>

**Purpose** To ensure stress is prevented and managed for the staff of Otago Polytechnic.

**Background** The Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 identified stress as a potential hazard in the workplace. The Polytechnic is required to have in place suitable processes to manage a range of hazards including stress that may be encountered in the workplace.

**Statutory Compliance** Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and associated Regulations and Amendments.

**National Guidelines** Worksafe New Zealand Occupational Safety and Health information sheets:

- Healthy Work - Managing stress and fatigue in the workplace
- Shift work - Managing shiftwork to minimise workplace fatigue

<http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/information-guidance/guidance-by-hazard-type/stress-fatigue>

**Policy and Procedures**

### 1. Prevention

Otago Polytechnic intends to create and maintain a healthy work environment which is conducive with high levels of staff wellbeing:

- 1.1. Workloads will be managed through MP0462 Workload policy to ensure work is fair and equitable.
- 1.2. Managers will treat individuals with respect and fairness.
- 1.3. Individuals will treat each other with respect and maintain professional working relationships.
- 1.4. If an individual believes he or she is stressed in a way that may affect their work performance there is a responsibility to report this to their manager and seek assistance.
- 1.5. Work environment surveys will be undertaken.
- 1.6. There will be monitoring of indicators of stress e.g. absenteeism, incident reporting (HR/H&S), high staff turn-over, complaints and other behaviours which may indicate high stress levels.

### 2. Management of the Effects of Stress

- 2.1. All managers will undergo training in stress prevention and management.
- 2.2. Complaints regarding work-related stress will be handled by the departmental manager and where appropriate, Human Resources.
- 2.3. Heads of School/Managers will maintain a healthy work environment by ensuring:
  - Good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes
  - Staff are fully trained to discharge their duties
  - Constructive and timely feedback to staff on performance is provided



- Staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities
- Workloads are monitored to ensure that people are not overloaded
- Working hours and overtime are monitored to ensure that staff are not overworking
- Leave is monitored/managed to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement
- That they are proactive in identifying and dealing with stressors and stress
- That they encourage staff to attend seminars relating to stress prevention and management
- That they intervene promptly when stress or impairment is identified (refer to flow chart – Appendix 2)

#### 2.4. Procedure for Staff

- Staff are encouraged to attend training on stress prevention and management.
- Staff are expected to participate in the process of identification and investigation of stressors, the problem solving process and where appropriate any rehabilitation following significant stress.

#### 2.5. Dealing with unresolved issues of ongoing stress

- Where there is an unresolved or ongoing issue of stress; the Director: Organisational Development will appoint an appropriate investigator to assess the matter.
- If there is a medical diagnosis referring to work-related stress, it is important that the diagnosis is accurate and treatment is effective. To ensure such cases are managed appropriately and in a timely manner (i.e. to gain a successful outcome/return to health), further specialist advice may be sought from a registered medical practitioner at the request and cost of Otago Polytechnic.
- Following investigation, a decision will be made whether the stress-related impairment is accepted or not accepted as work-related.
- Regardless of cause, Otago Polytechnic is committed to a constructive and supportive process of investigation, problem solving and rehabilitation.
- Following this a formal rehabilitation plan will be put in place.

#### 2.6. Best Practice Guidelines (Appendix 1) are attached for staff and manager information.

#### 2.7. The attached flowcharts indicate the likely process that will be followed:

- Facilitated problem solving approach (Appendix 2)
- Formal investigation process (Appendix 3)

### Referral Documents

MP0439 Flexible Working Arrangements  
 MP0444 Resolving Performance Problems (includes Code of Conduct)  
 MP0445 Harassment & Bullying Prevention and Management Policy  
 MP0460 Performance Review  
 MP0461 Staff Development  
 MP0462 Workload  
 MP0482 Annual and Discretionary Leave  
 Staff Assistance Programme (SAP)  
 Health and Safety Policies



## Guidelines and Additional Information

### WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress as part of life is normal and is often a positive experience in that it challenges and motivates us. Stress can be 'good' or 'bad' depending on many things and there is a complex interaction between all aspects of a person's life that occurs to make them feel well or unwell. There is a great range of difference with individuals and their responses - there are variable degrees of tolerances, past experiences, perceptions, amount of support they get from personal and work relationships, health status, interest and importance/meaning they find in their job, changes in life and personal circumstance. To maintain good health and a sense of well-being, a balance between stimulation and rest is required. "Stress" is a commonly used term. *It is not a diagnosis or illness.* However, stressors (see below) may combine or increase to contribute to a sense of feeling overburdened or unwell.

### STRESSORS

These are events or circumstance that can lead to someone feeling that physical or psychological demands are about to exceed his or her ability to cope. They can:

- Be inherent in a job because of factors that make the occupation what it is – such as in the mixture of pressures in police work or psychiatric nursing; with shift work; jobs with exposure to the threat of violence
- Arise because of the way a job is organised. This may include physical factors (excess noise, heat, cold etc) as well as physiological factors that affect the body's balance (shift work, inadequate recuperative time etc)
- Arise out of excessive demands such as unrealistic family expectations or deadlines at work
- Arise out of personal factors such as health status, relationships, ability or inability to cope with difficult situations, etc.

### WORKPLACE STRESS

Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health, describes workplace stress as being a result of interaction between a person and their work environment. For the person, it is the awareness of not being able to cope with the demands of their work environment, with an associated negative emotional response.

Where individuals may not be coping with the demands/requirements of their work at Otago Polytechnic, it is important that the contributing factors be identified and investigated through a managed process.

### FATIGUE

Department of Labour, Occupational Health and Safety, describes fatigue as the temporary inability, decrease in ability, or strong disinclination to respond to a situation because of previous over-activity, either mental or physical.

### IMPAIRMENT

Awareness of excessive stress and fatigue when it develops is good and responding to it is necessary to maintain health and wellbeing. This will involve finding solutions, implementing change in situations and it is likely that it will involve the assistance of other people.

Where the impact of stress and fatigue approaches a level of impairment it is essential that there is change. To maintain safety and wellness at work, and to meet OSH requirements, managers who observe impairment in an employee at work, and employees who are experiencing signs of impairment, should report this situation and implement a process of support and change.

Research has shown work related stress to have adverse effect for organisations in terms of:

- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance and productivity
- Staff turnover and intention to leave
- Attendance levels
- Staff recruitment and retention



- Student satisfaction
- Organisational image and reputation
- Potential for litigation

Consideration should be given to the impact on the individual and their unit or team. For example, losing one colleague for a period with a stress-related illness can have a dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team.

#### **TACKLING STRESS PREVENTS ILL HEALTH**

There is convincing evidence that prolonged periods of stress, including work related stress, have an adverse effect on health. Research provides links with stress and

- Physical effects such as heart disease and ongoing back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal and sleep disturbances and various minor illnesses; and
- Psychological effects such as anxiety and depression

Otago Polytechnic encourages a healthy workplace culture, supports individual staff and managers to identify stressors and to assist each other in dealing with them. This approach is based on managers, staff and their representatives working together to continuously improve performance in tackling work-related stress and in supporting staff where the impact of personal stress is impacting on their work.

#### **RESOURCES**

Provision of information on stress management (pamphlets, training)

Staff Assistance Programme (SAP)

Training opportunities e.g. Stress Prevention and Management, Dealing with Difficult People, Time Management.

#### **SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR INDIVIDUALS**

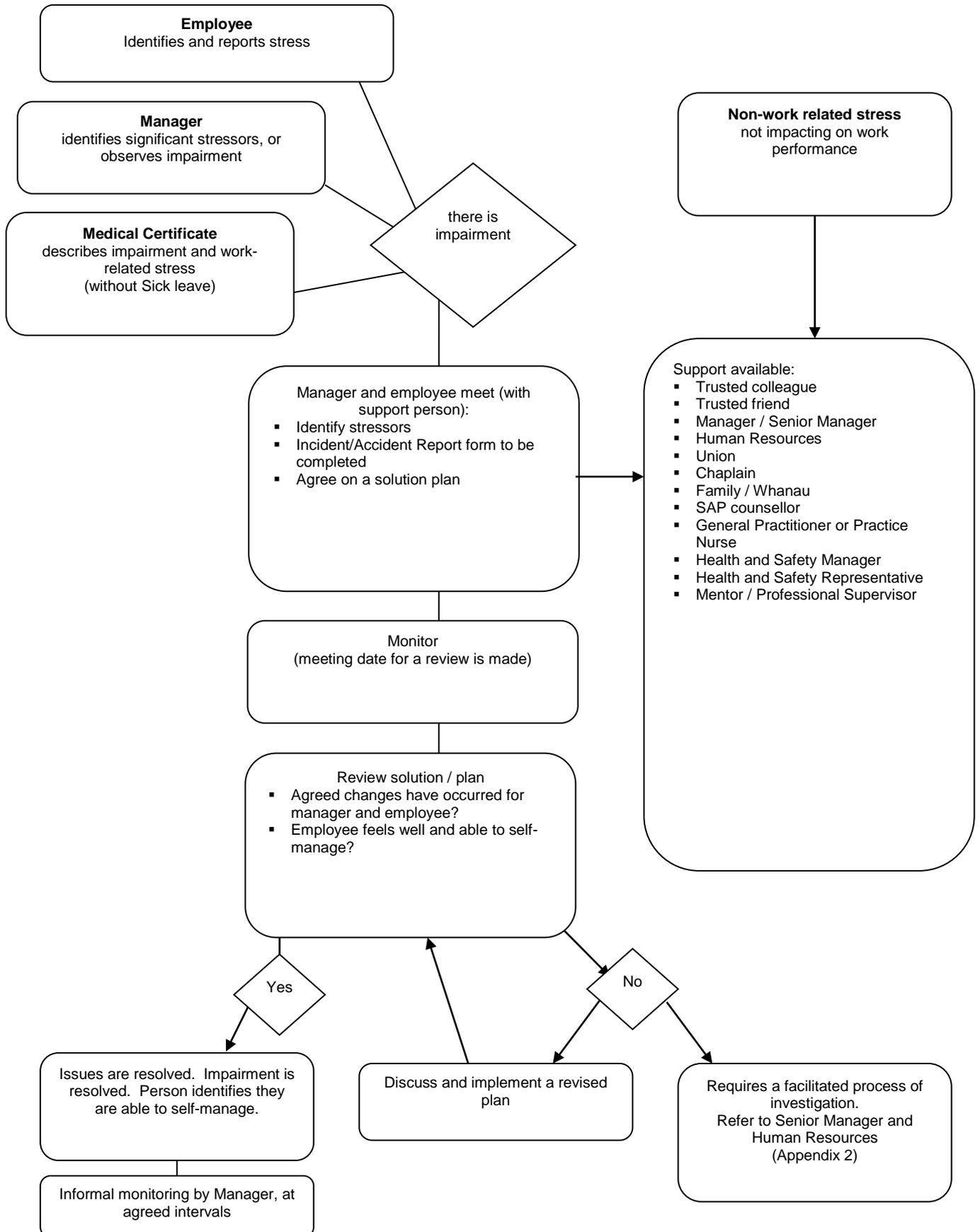
Resources are available to assist staff. Discuss your individual needs with your manager or the Human Resources staff. Training opportunities are available and a Staff Assistance Programme is available.

Individual support is very helpful and is available from a range of sources including:

- Trusted colleague or friend
- SAP counsellor (confidential)
- Health and Safety Manager
- Chaplain
- Health and Safety Representative
- Head of School/Programme Manager
- Family/whanau
- Mentor/professional
- Human Resources
- Union representative
- Doctor or nurse

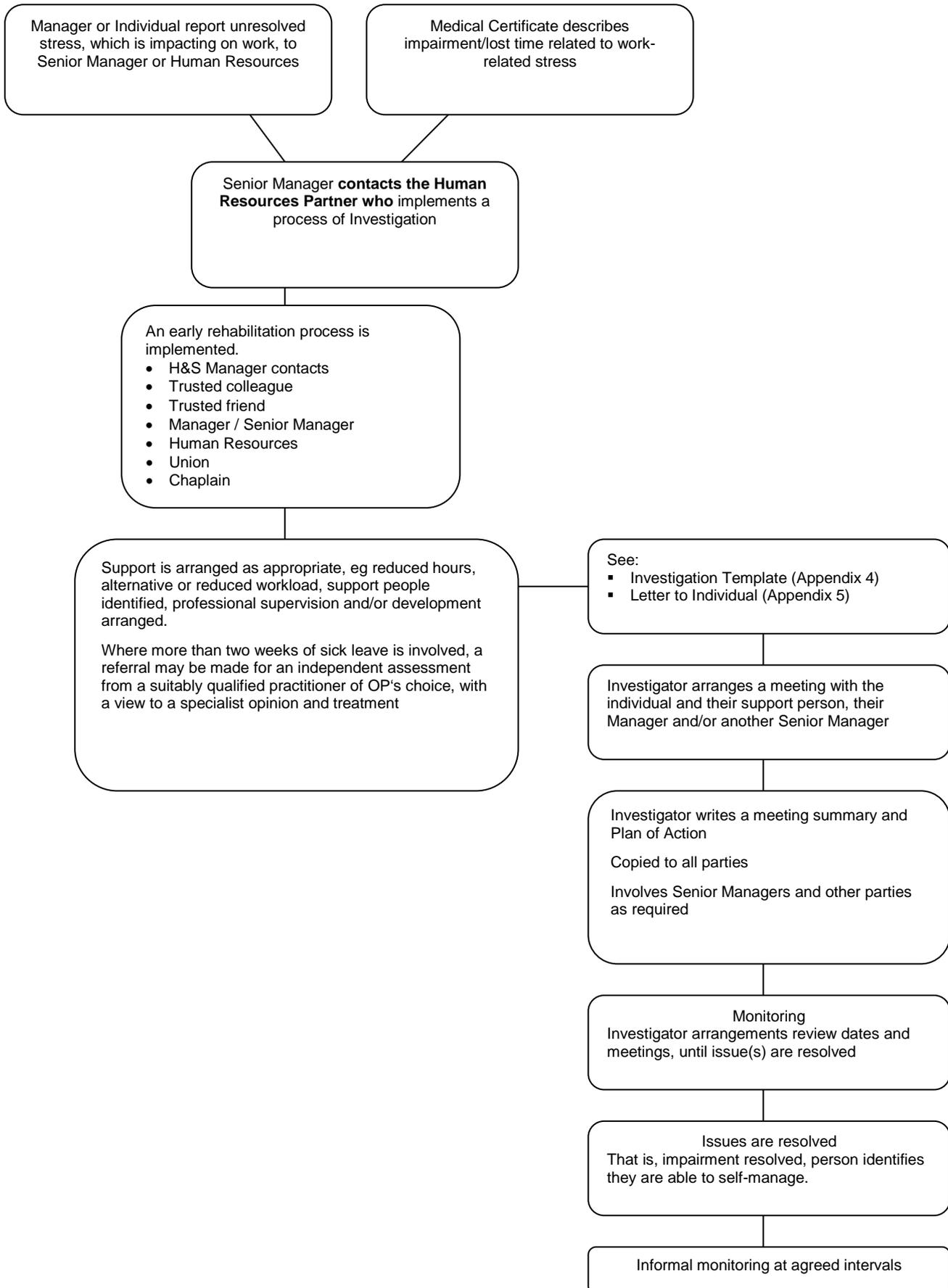
## Appendix 2

### Stress is identified – a problem-solving approach



## Appendix 3

### Formal investigation into reported, unresolved work-related stress



## Health and Safety Investigation re Report of Work Related Stress

Name:

Department:

Meeting date:

Present: *(name and titles)*

**Name of Person:** Outline of matters of concern/causative factors for stress

eg. Organisational issues?

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eg. Department issues?

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eg. Personal and/or Inter-personal issues?

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**Name of Investigator:** (ask the following questions to the person)

Hours of work?

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Workload?

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Work Methods - workflow/work organisation/personal work organisation and style/skills needed match abilities (professional development)?

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Resources?

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Discussion amongst group:

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**Plan agreed by group:**

**Investigator name** will ... e.g. arrange a review meeting / discuss issue with ...

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Manager will ...

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**Person** will .....

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Others present will

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**Review:** all present meet again ...

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Investigator*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



12 September 2016

Dear

**re: Sick leave - reported stress related to work**

I am sorry to hear that you are unwell, and hope that you are feeling better soon.

*Your medical certificate indicates you are on leave due to stress ...*

*You have described that you are you are being effected by work related stress ...*

Otago Polytechnic is required under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and associated Regulations and Amendments to investigate this with you and your manager with the intention of identifying the causative factors and implementing a plan of action/change.

To do this I will facilitate a meeting in my role as (*Human Resources Partner or Health and Safety Manager*). Your manager (*and/or another senior member of staff*) will be present, and we encourage you to bring a support person of your choice. I have attached an outline of the meeting process and documentation, copies of which will be given to all attendees after meetings.

A meeting time has arranged for \_\_\_\_\_, or alternatively \_\_\_\_\_. Can you please confirm which time you are available.

Also, we wish to implement an early return to work plan (rehabilitation) and ask that you discuss this with your medical practitioner. We can offer supported work – reduced hours with gradual increase, peer and management support and monitoring, with clearly defined duties. We invite your medical practitioner to a rehabilitation meeting to discuss the best of these options. Otago Polytechnic will pay your doctor for time to attend. If desired, rehabilitation can be included at the above meeting or at a separate meeting.

Please feel free to contact any of our Staff Assistance Programme providers for support, I have enclosed a pamphlet for your information.

I look forward to meeting with you, and am available to discuss any matters of concern at any time.

Yours sincerely

*Human Resources Partner or  
Health and Safety Manager*

cc: **Doctor**  
**Manager**

