HRP12: Fitness for Work

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Procedure outlines how Southern Cross University (SCU) identifies and manages risks related to fitness for work, and sets out responsibilities and strategies to ensure individuals can perform their duties safely and effectively.

(2) All employees, students, and others must follow this Procedure.

(3) This Procedure applies to all SCU Work Units and sites.

Section 2 - Definitions

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): A confidential, professional counselling service available to SCU employees.

Fatigue: A state of mental and/or physical exhaustion that reduces a person's ability to perform work safely and effectively.

Fit for Work: An individual is in a state (physically, mentally and emotionally) that enables the employee to perform assigned tasks competently and in a manner that does not compromise or threaten the safety or health of themselves or others.

Section 3 - General Principles

(4) SCU has a duty of care to ensure that work is carried out safely and that systems are in place to manage risks associated with individuals who may be unfit for work while undertaking activities on SCU's behalf.

(5) Fitness for work may be affected by:

  a. Medical conditions or injuries.
  b. Use of alcohol or other drugs.
  c. Fatigue or inadequate rest.
  d. Psychological distress or mental health conditions.
  e. Stress arising from work or personal circumstances.
  f. Exposure to traumatic events or cumulative workplace stressors.

(6) Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that an individual may be unfit for work, appropriate action must be taken to assess and manage any resulting health and safety risks, in accordance with this Procedure and relevant University policies

Medical Conditions

(7) Employees who have a medical condition that may affect their ability to perform work safely or effectively must notify their supervisor of any functional limitations relevant to their role. Disclosure of specific medical details is not required unless necessary to support risk management, reasonable adjustments, or fitness-for-work assessments in

accordance with University policy.

(8) Individuals are responsible for ensuring that any medication they take, whether prescribed or over-the-counter, does not compromise their fitness for work. Where a medication may affect alertness, coordination, judgement or any other aspect of safe work performance, individuals must take appropriate steps to manage the associated risks. These steps include:

  a. Consulting their treating practitioner about the potential impact of the medication in the context of their work duties.
  b. Using the medication in accordance with medical advice or manufacturer instructions.
  c. Informing their supervisor if the medication is likely to impair their ability to work safely.
  d. Reporting any adverse side effects that may present a risk to themselves or others in the workplace.

Alcohol & Drugs

(9) Employees must not present for work under the influence of alcohol or any substance that may impair their capacity to perform their duties safely. This includes prescription and non-prescription medications where use may result in impairment. All employees are expected to manage their alcohol and drug use responsibly and comply with relevant University policies, including the SCU Code of Conduct. The acceptable blood alcohol concentration for employees is consistent with applicable road safety laws, meaning individuals must have a blood alcohol level below the legal driving limit when performing work duties.

Fatigue

(10) SCU recognises that fatigue may become a health and safety risk in situations involving extended working hours or non-standard work arrangements. Where an employee is required to regularly work more than 12 hours in a day, or more than 50 hours in a week, or regularly has less than 10 hours between shifts, the University will assess the associated risks and consult with the employee to determine whether additional controls or adjustments are needed. Supervisors should seek advice from WHS or HR where there is uncertainty about fatigue-related risk.

(11) Employees are expected to take reasonable steps to manage their own fitness for work, including using rest periods to recover from work-related fatigue. Where an employee is concerned that fatigue may affect their ability to work safely, they should raise the matter with their supervisor or use the appropriate reporting mechanisms. Employees are also expected to participate in any training provided and comply with SCU procedures relevant to fatigue and outside work.

Rostering Hours of Work Guidelines

(12) Hours of work provisions are governed by the SCU Enterprise Agreement or other industrial and employment instruments. Where hours worked may give rise to fatigue-related risks, this Procedure applies.

(13) From time to time, employees may undertake additional work outside their primary role, including overtime or temporary duties such as teaching or project-based activities. Where these arrangements result in working hours that meet the fatigue thresholds outlined in clause (10), supervisors and employees should discuss the proposed arrangement to ensure that working hours remain reasonable and that any associated risks to health and safety are appropriately managed.

WHS Guidance and Support for Fatigue Management

(14) Employees and supervisors are encouraged to seek advice from the WHS team where they have concerns about fatigue-related risks, including in situations involving extended hours, non-standard work arrangements, or additional duties. The WHS team can provide guidance on appropriate controls, support tools, and strategies to manage fatigue

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in the context of the work being performed.

Managing Fatigue Risks

(15) Where there is concern that an employee's hours of work or work arrangements may give rise to fatigue-related risks, a discussion should occur between the employee and their supervisor to assess the situation and identify appropriate controls. This may include modifying hours, adjusting duties, or allowing additional rest periods.

(16) Supervisors are encouraged to seek advice from the WHS team where the risk is uncertain or where more structured support may be required. In high-risk situations, such as those involving safety-critical work or known fatigue symptoms, further assessment may be undertaken in consultation with WHS.

Self-Assessment

(17) Employees are encouraged to reflect on their own fatigue levels and consider whether they are fit to perform their duties safely. Tools such as self-assessment checklists or mobile applications may be used to support personal assessment. Where an employee is concerned that fatigue may affect their ability to work safely, they should discuss the matter with their supervisor and seek support if needed.

Managing Fitness to Work Concerns

(18) Where there are concerns that an employee is not fit to perform their role safely or effectively, the matter should be discussed with the employee and advice sought from the WHS or HR team. Depending on the circumstances, temporary adjustments to duties or work arrangements may be made, consistent with the University's injury management and leave policies. Where suitable duties are not available, the employee may be required to access leave entitlements until they are fit to resume work.

Non-Compliance with Fitness for Work Processes

(19) This Procedure is intended to support the safe and reasonable management of fitness for work concerns. Where an employee does not comply with a lawful and safe direction in relation to this Procedure, the matter may be addressed having regard to their obligations under work health and safety legislation and other duties of employment, including the duty to follow lawful and reasonable directions.

Employee Support

(20) SCU recognises that employees may experience temporary or ongoing health issues, including fatigue, illness or substance-related concerns, that affect their fitness for work. Employees are encouraged to seek support if they are experiencing difficulties that may impact their ability to perform their role safely. Support is available through the Employee Assistance Program, referral to external medical practitioners, or engagement with the University's rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators where applicable.

Awareness of this Procedure

(21) SCU will ensure that employees are made aware of this Procedure as part of relevant induction or onboarding processes. Refresher communication or guidance may also be provided where fitness for work issues are identified or where role-specific risks exist.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(22) Refer to WHSMP13: Responsibility and Accountability Statement.

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Section 5 - Records of Documentation

(23) All relevant documentation will be recorded and kept in accordance with WHS Legislation and other legislative obligations, including:

    a. Training records.
    b. Records of risk assessments must be retained for 28 days after the completion of the work to which they relate.
    c. Notifiable incident: all records must be kept for two years after the incident.

Section 6 - Revision and Approval History

(24) This procedure will be reviewed as per nominated review dates or because of other events, such as:

    a. Internal and external audit outcomes.
    b. Legislative changes.
    c. Outcomes from management reviews.
    d. Incidents.

Section 7 - References

(25) Work Health and Safety Act (in the applicable jurisdiction that SCU operates)

(26) Work Health and Safety Regulation (in the applicable jurisdiction that SCU operates)

Section 8 - Related Documents

(27) [Code of Conduct](#)

(28) SCU Enterprise Agreement 2024

(29) [Outside Work Policy](#)

(30) [WHSMP13: Responsibility and Accountability Statement](#)

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