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## 1. OBJECTIVE

To outline RMIT University's (RMIT) approach to identify, assess and manage psychosocial risks to staff, students, contractors, and visitors.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Psychosocial risks are elements of the work or study environment that have the potential to cause work or study-related stress and can lead to physical and psychological harm. Examples of common psychosocial risks can be seen in Figure 1, with those in dark yellow reflecting the psychosocial risks that cause disproportionate harm in comparison to those in light yellow.



**Figure 1. Common Psychosocial Risks in the work and study environment**

## 3. SCOPE

RMIT's psychosocial risk management process applies to all RMIT schools, clusters, colleges, portfolios, departments, and student activities globally.

### 3.1. Scope limitation

The psychosocial risk management process is for the identification and control of group-level psychosocial risks in the RMIT work and study environment and does not refer to the assessment or management of individual mental health risks. For immediate concerns for the wellbeing of an individual, refer to Staff Line (for students) or to the Employee Assistance Program (for staff).

## 4. WHAT MUST GO RIGHT?

The expected outcomes – known as 'what must go right' – will be that:

- Potential psychosocial risks to staff, students, contractors, and visitors are identified
- Identified risks are assessed for their potential to cause harm
- A psychosocial risk register has been prepared in order to identify, implement and monitor controls

- Control measures are implemented and monitored to manage identified psychosocial risks
- Control measures are assessed annually or after a significant change has occurred

## 5. PROCEDURE

### 5.1. Implementation

Creating a psychologically safe and healthy environment requires conscious effort from everyone. The **Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004** (the **OHS Act**) requires employers to do whatever is ‘reasonably practicable’ to maintain a safe work and study environment that protects staff and students against psychosocial risk. The framework seen in Figure 2 can be used to manage psychosocial risk in the work and study environment.



**Figure 2. Psychosocial Risk Management Process**

### 5.2. Responsibilities

All RMIT staff, students, delivery partners, contractors and volunteers have some level of responsibility for psychosocial risk management at RMIT. The Head of College/ Portfolio is responsible for overseeing the psychosocial risk management process to ensure the College/Portfolio have adequately managed psychosocial risks within their area. In general, this will mean that an annually updated and well consulted Psychosocial Risk Register is in place for each School/Department. In some cases, where the risk profiles are considered to be sufficiently similar, shared planning may occur between two or more Schools/Departments, with appropriate consultation and input from each participating area. The Head of School/ Department is responsible for implementing the psychosocial risk management process in their School/Department to ensure psychosocial risks are identified, assessed and controlled in their area, drawing on support from others including Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Advisors, People Partners, and the consulted students and staff. Importantly, the OHS Act (2004) requires consultation with those who are affected by physical and psychological safety matters within the workplace (e.g., RMIT staff and students) throughout the entire psychosocial risk management process.

#### 5.2.1. Distinguishing psychosocial risk registers from local area mental wellbeing action plans

As part of the actions arising from RMIT’s annual mental wellbeing survey, we are encouraging all local areas (ie. Schools/Departments) to develop their own local Mental Wellbeing Action Plans, overseen by their local HSW Committees. This process has been designed with the psychosocial risk management procedure in mind and is considered to meet the standards for consultation required within the OHS Act (2004). As a result, local area Mental Wellbeing Action Plans will most likely include well consulted interventions which contribute to the prevention and

management of psychosocial risks. Feedback and interventions arising from the Mental Wellbeing Action Planning process should therefore be acknowledged and documented as part of the psychosocial risk management process.

### 5.3. Psychosocial Risk Management Process

#### 5.3.1. Identify sources of potential harm

The first step of the psychosocial risk management process is to identify psychosocial risks present in the work or study environment. As psychosocial risks are in many cases subjective, it is important to draw on multiple data points to provide a holistic picture of the psychosocial risks presenting in the work and study area. Some of the data points that can help to identify psychosocial risks presenting in the work and study environment include:

- Gathering anecdotal feedback through consulting staff, students, leaders, and subject matter experts (e.g., HSW advisors).
- Reviewing desktop data (e.g., P.R.I.M.E. reports, unplanned leave data, WorkCover claims).
- Conducting surveys or focus groups to gather targeted information (e.g., Mental Wellbeing survey).
- Observing staff and students in the environment for signs of psychosocial risk.

The data collected during this stage should be considered holistically and used to identify psychosocial risks that may be present in the work or study environment. Ensure all identified psychosocial risks are documented clearly within your **Psychosocial Risk Register** (refer to Psychosocial Risk Management Guide for more detail on how to complete).

#### 5.3.2. Assess the risk

The second stage of the psychosocial risk management process involves assessing psychosocial risks in the work and study environment. Psychosocial risk is typically assessed by weighing up the **prevalence** and **consequence** to determine the severity of the risk and the urgency for which the risk should be addressed.

Assessing the **prevalence** of the psychosocial risk is used to evaluate the ‘likelihood’ of the risk occurring. Prevalence is assessed through considering the proportion of staff/ students impacted by the risk and the proportion of the time they are likely to be impacted (See Table 1). In the absence of comprehensive data, you may need to take an educated guess to assess prevalence. Consider the data sources at your disposal and consult with staff or students to make this assessment.

**Table 1. Prevalence Calculator**

	Frequency				
% of staff impacted	<20% of the time	20-40% of the time	40-60% of the time	60-80% of the time	>80% of the time
<20% of staff	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High
20-40% of staff	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	High
40-60% of staff	Low	Moderate	High	High	Very High
60-80% of staff	Moderate	High	High	Very High	Very High
>80% staff	High	High	Very High	Very High	Very High

It is important to remember that psychosocial risks are often intertwined and should rarely be considered in isolation. The compounding effect of multiple psychosocial risks is likely to have a greater impact than each risk alone, so you may need to assess multiple risks together. Therefore, when assessing a psychosocial risk within your work or study area, you must consider if other psychosocial risks are present. This can be achieved through consulting staff and students to determine if other psychosocial risks are present once a psychosocial risk has been identified.

To assess for the potential harm caused by psychosocial risks, we consider the **consequence** of the risk. The consequence of the risk refers to the average level of distress experienced by those who are impacted (see Table 2). This approach takes into consideration protective factors within the workplace that can help people cope with stress (e.g., strong co-worker relationships) whilst also acknowledging that people do not always react to a given situation in the same way.

**Table 2. Consequence Level Descriptors**

Consequence Level	Descriptor
Minor	Causes little or no distress or causes short-term subjective inconvenience to those impacted
Moderate	Causes short-term, low-moderate levels of distress to those impacted
Major	Causes medium-term, moderate-high levels of distress for those impacted, requiring a short time off work or lighter duties to recover
Severe	Causes long-term, severe levels of distress for those impacted, requiring an extended time off work or light duties and/or mental health intervention to recover
Extreme	Causes long-term, extreme levels of distress resulting in the potential of injury to the individual and/or others, requiring extensive rehabilitation and time off work to recover

Once you have identified the **prevalence** and **consequence** for each psychosocial risk, you can define the risk level (See Table 3). Defining the risk level can help to prioritise risk control actions, with higher ratings indicating greater urgency with which the risk should be addressed.

Table 3. Defining the Risk Exposure Rating

Prevalence (% of staff x Frequency)	Subjective Impact				
	Minor (1)	Moderate (2)	Major (3)	Severe (4)	Extreme (5)
Very High (Almost Certain – E)	Medium	High	Critical	Critical	Critical
High (Likely – D)	Medium	Medium	High	Critical	Critical
Moderate (Possible – C)	Low	Medium	High	High	Critical
Low (Unlikely – B)	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
Very Low (Rare - A)	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High

Ensure risk ratings are documented for each identified risk within your **Psychosocial Risk Register** (refer to Psychosocial Risk Management Guide for more detail on how to complete).

5.3.3. Identify Control Measures

The third stage of the psychosocial risk management process involves identifying appropriate risk control measures to manage psychosocial risk in the work and study environment. Psychosocial risks are almost impossible to eliminate however, employers are obligated to do whatever is ‘reasonably practicable’ to control or minimise the impact of psychosocial risk in the work and learning environment. There are three broad categories of intervention that can be used to control psychosocial risk. These include:

1. **Prevention:** Redesigning the environment to prevent exposure to the risk
2. **Mitigation:** Where the risk cannot be prevented, minimise the impact of the risk
3. **Recovery:** Post-exposure support to impacted individuals

In planning psychosocial risk controls, local areas can utilise existing policies, programs and services available to all teams at RMIT or can introduce their own initiatives at the local level. There is no ‘right’ way to select psychosocial control measures. Every team context is different from the next, so what will work in one area may not work in another. Mental Wellbeing Action Planning is a process introduced at RMIT to promote collaboration between leaders, staff, and students to ensure appropriate control measures are identified and implemented within a particular work/study area. This process involves leaders working together with staff and students to determine what measures can be put in place to prevent exposure to psychosocial risk, mitigate the impacts of psychosocial risks, and support recovery to those exposed to psychosocial risks. The applicable documents that detail how to complete a mental wellbeing action plan, including the template for the action plan are available on the **RMIT Mental Wellbeing** SharePoint page.

When identifying control measures, we weigh up the *effort* (e.g., ease of implementation) and *impact* of the intervention (the extent to which it results in harm reduction). For example, while some control measures are more likely to tackle systemic issues that lead to psychosocial risk, others require less effort but still yield positive results. Refer to the **HR – HSW-PR19-WI01 - Psychosocial Risk Management Guide** for more detail on prioritising risk control initiatives.

Ensure all identified planned controls are documented clearly within your **Psychosocial Risk Register**, along with an assessment of residual risk assuming all controls are implemented as planned (refer to Psychosocial Risk Management Guide for more detail on how to complete).

#### 5.3.4. *Implement control measures*

It is important to acknowledge that how control measures are implemented is equally important as which control measures are implemented. The most impactful control measures typically require a level of behaviour change to be effective. Therefore, it is important that you consider how you communicate the benefits of specific controls to ensure that control measures are implemented effectively. Communications about the benefits for controls should answer three questions:

- What will the control measure look like in the work/study environment?
- Why is the control measure necessary?
- What are the benefits to staff and students' health and safety?

Ensure each psychosocial risk is allocated to a Risk Owner and include planned implementation and review dates for all controls within your **Psychosocial Risk Register** (refer to Psychosocial Risk Management Guide for more detail on how to complete).

#### 5.3.5. *Review and monitor effectiveness of control measures*

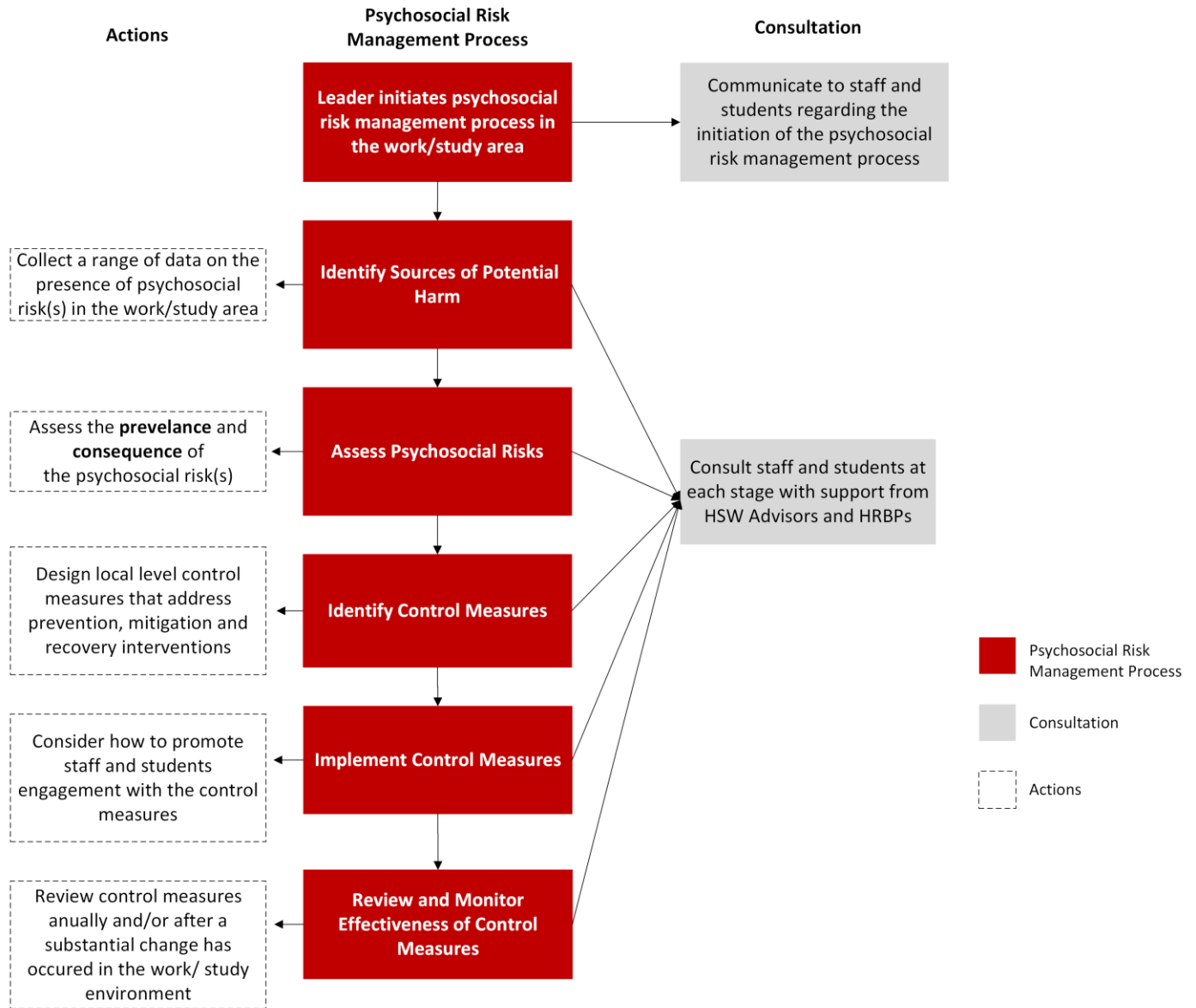
Reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of the control measures is essential to ensuring they are achieving what they were designed to in protecting the RMIT community against psychosocial risk. It is important to remember that risk assessments will only reflect the moment in time in which you assessed the psychosocial risk(s) and that they should be monitored and reviewed ongoingly. At a minimum, it is recommended that psychosocial risk management plans be reviewed on an annual basis and/or after a substantial change has occurred within the organisation (e.g., change in management or policy).

Reviewing your control measures is integral to ensuring they are still fit-for-purpose. Furthermore, communicating lessons learned from the psychosocial risk management process can help to promote continuous improvement in RMIT's approach to managing psychosocial risk. Altogether, continuously reviewing and iterating psychosocial controls is essential to ensure we continue to meet the needs of the RMIT community.

Ensure any modifications to controls are captured clearly within your **Psychosocial Risk Register**, along with lessons learned to inform future risk management activities (refer to Psychosocial Risk Management Guide for more detail on how to complete).

**5.4. Psychosocial risk management process map**

The below is a high-level process map for undertaking the psychosocial risk management process. Please refer to sections above for further detail.





## 6. Responsibilities

### 6.1. Senior and Operational Leaders

- Implement the psychosocial risk assessment and management process at the School or Department level
- Hold accountability for completion and documentation of annual psychosocial risk assessment & management action plans at the School or Department level
- Manage the implementation of measures to ensure adequate control of psychosocial risks
- Lead the development of Annual Wellbeing Action Planning, and hold accountability for timely and effective implementation
- Ensure that staff are, where necessary, trained to achieve the required awareness and competence to reduce exposure to, and impact of, psychosocial risks
- Respond to early warning signs and complaints with timely and appropriate interventions (reaching out for advice, support and referrals as required)
- Consult with staff, HSW Advisors, People Partner and subject experts where necessary
- Review and report on performance in relation to this procedure
- Report quarterly to the RMIT HSW Committee
- Lead by example through modelling a culture of care and promoting an environment of psychological safety

### 6.2. Student Leaders

- Receive student concerns of psychosocial risk and disclosures of psychosocial incidents and escalate accordingly
- Provide feedback to course coordinators around managing and preventing psychosocial risk in the study environment
- Demonstrate strong understanding of responsibilities for health, safety and wellbeing of students engaging with clubs and associations (including duty of care)
- Consider duty of care and apply knowledge of risk and protective factors when planning events and activities
- Complete risk assessments prior to hosting events and activities, including psychosocial risks
- Use appropriate channels to escalate presenting collective concerns for psychosocial risks
- Maintain an awareness of at-risk or vulnerable cohorts within the University community and avenues for specialised support for these groups

### 6.3. People Partners

- Provide advice on psychosocial risk matters and oversight of the psychosocial risk management process as required
- Contribute to the psychosocial risk assessment and management process at the School or Department level
- Assist in developing psychosocial risk and wellbeing KPIs
- Assist in developing and implementing psychosocial risk action plans and intervention strategies
- Coordinate stakeholders to support implementation of risk controls and recommendations
- Assist with the identification and integration of any additional organisation and legislative requirements for psychosocial risk management and record keeping

### 6.4. HSW Committee Chairs

- Attend HSW Committee meetings and report back to area on issues discussed in the meetings
- Track progress on promoting HSW roles and responsibilities
- Ensure HSW risk profiles are in place within allocated timeframes

- Collect feedback from HSW Committee on new or emerging HSW risks, changes to risk profiles, control effectiveness, and incident trends
- Check compliance with workplace inspections
- Feed new risks, trends, or relevant feedback to leadership team

## 6.5. HSW Committee Members

- Collect feedback from staff and students about potential risks to psychological wellbeing
- Raise psychosocial risks for inclusion in local risk registers
- Partner with management to propose fit-for-purpose strategies to control psychosocial risks
- Engage in the consultation process for annual psychosocial risk assessment
- Escalate systemic issues around psychosocial risks for review

## 6.6. Mental Wellbeing Champions

- Advocate for mental wellbeing at RMIT, including psychosocial risk management
- Attend the relevant HSW Committee meetings and liaise with their HSR to ensure any psychosocial risks or hazards are raised and addressed appropriately
- Ensure psychosocial risks are considered and addressed appropriately and sensitively
- Cascade information on Global Mental Wellbeing initiatives
- Act as main point of contact for mental wellbeing engagement activities in their area

## 6.7. Health and Safety Operations Team

- Provide expert advice on HSW matters and oversight of the psychosocial risk management process across RMIT
- Assist with enterprise level risk evaluations & implementing systemic interventions
- Contribute to the psychosocial risk assessment and management process at the School or Department level
- Assist with Psychosocial Incident Management and Investigation Process
- Assist with annual psychosocial risk management planning
- Provide governance of psychosocial risk management interventions to ensure appropriate controls are in place across RMIT
- Provide instruction, mentoring and coaching in relation to psychosocial risks, wellbeing, and the risk management process as required
- Engage in deep dive psychosocial risk assessment upon request
- Assist in developing psychosocial risk and wellbeing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Assist in developing and implementing psychosocial risk action plans and intervention strategies
- Assist with the identification and integration of any additional organisation and legislative requirements for psychosocial risk management and record keeping

## 6.8. Curriculum Designers

- Conduct psychosocial risk assessments to identify potential sources of mental health risk in the curriculum design that may foreseeably cause distress to students
- Modify curriculum design and course delivery to prevent exposure to psychosocial risk where possible, mitigate impacts where prevention is not possible, and to support recovery from course-related psychosocial impacts
- Document psychosocial risk assessment and controls in the psychosocial risk register

- Review psychosocial risk register on an annual basis or upon introduction of significant changes to the curriculum

**6.9. Staff, students, contractors, and visitors**

- Take care of their own health, safety and wellbeing and that of others
- Be aware of psychosocial risks present in the work/study environment
- Ensure familiarity with psychosocial risk policies and processes
- Report risks and partner with RMIT to devise controls
- Cooperate with RMIT interventions/ procedures to minimise risks
- Provide feedback to RMIT on what needs to improve in relation to psychosocial risk management

**7. Definitions**

Defines any key terms and acronyms relating to the process

<b>Term / acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Control measures / controls</b>	Actions that are implemented to prevent or mitigate the occurrence of a risk or the impact it may cause and/or provide support to those who have been impacted by the risk.
<b>Consequence</b>	Subjective assessment of the average level of distress experienced by those who are impacted by the risk.
<b>Duty of Care</b>	A legal obligation to take reasonable steps to not cause foreseeable harm to another person or their property.
<b>HSRs</b>	Health and Safety Representatives.
<b>HSW</b>	Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
<b>People Partner</b>	Human Resource Business Partner.
<b>Mental Wellbeing Champion</b>	Nominated staff members who support the effective implementation of RMIT’s Mental Wellbeing Plan. The Mental Wellbeing Champions attend the quarterly Mental Wellbeing Working Group meetings chaired by the RMIT Wellbeing team.
<b>Psychosocial Risk</b>	Elements of the work or study environment that have the potential to cause stress and can lead to physical and/or psychological harm.
<b>Psychosocial Incident</b>	An occurrence that has led to, or might lead to, psychological injury resulting from exposure to psychosocial risk.
<b>Psychological safety</b>	A sense of safety in one’s ability to speak up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes without fear of negative consequences to their self-image, status or career.
<b>Psychosocial safety climate</b>	The organisational climate for employee psychological health, wellbeing and safety.
<b>P.R.I.M.E.</b>	Proactive. Reporting. Incident. Management. Excellence. - Online System for reporting and controlling incidents and risks.

<b>Reasonably practicable</b>	A legal requirement that involves doing whatever you are reasonably able to do to ensure the health and safety of the people interacting with an organisation/institution.
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<b>RMIT community</b>	All those who interact with RMIT University.
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## 8. Supporting Documents

<b>Document Number</b>	<b>Document Name</b>
HR – HSW-PR19–WI01	Psychosocial Risk Management Guide
HR – HSW-PR19–WI02	Library of Controls
HR-HSW-PR19-TM01	Psychosocial Risk Register
Mental Wellbeing Sharepoint	<a href="#">Mental Wellbeing Action Planning Process</a> <a href="#">How to report concerns about psychosocial risks or incidents at RMIT</a>