

lechyd a Diogelwch – Health and Safety

HOW TO CARRY OUT A RISK ASSESSMENT

This Information Sheet provides guidance on how to carry out a generic risk assessment. It forms part of a series of Information Sheets which supports the Risk Assessment Policy Standard.

1. BACKGROUND

The law does not expect the University to eliminate all risks, but it does require it to protect people so far as is 'reasonably practicable' from harm.

The aim of Risk Assessments is to help make sure no one gets hurt or becomes ill as a result of the University's undertakings or activities.

2. WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work or workplace, could cause harm and enables you to weigh up and identify whether enough is being done to prevent harm or if more precautions are needed.



Definitions:

- **Hazard:** a hazard is anything that may cause harm eg. chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, driving, undertaking social surveys [another word for Hazard could be Danger].
- **Risk:** is the combination of the likelihood, great or small, of someone being harmed by the hazard and the severity of that harm should it occur. .
- **Harm:** Injury or illness.
- **Reasonably Practicable:** Weighing up the cost versus the benefit ie. evaluating the risk against the trouble, time and money needed to control it.

3. CARRYING OUT A RISK ASSESSMENT

The University recommends use of the Health and Safety Executive's 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' process when assessing risk. This is an easy and practical risk assessment process, consisting of the following five steps:

- **Identify the hazards**, taking into account the harm which may occur and the risk (the likelihood) of the harm occurring
- **Decide who might be harmed and how.**
- **Evaluate the risks** and decide on precautions.

- **Record your findings** and implement them.
- **Review your risk assessment** and update if necessary.

It is important to decide if the hazard is significant and whether enough precautions are in place to control the risk, for example, there is no point assessing the risk of getting a paper cut which is a day to day risk and is insignificant.

In addition, do not over complicate the process as the risks within your College / Department will usually be well known and the necessary control measures easy to apply.

(Note: the use of numerical/quantitative risk assessments is not normally recommended as such introduces an element of unnecessary complexity that is not always necessary or appropriate at the University. Numerical values may be assigned for practical ease of prioritising recommended actions, but such are not generally necessary for identifying actual risk.)

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS

The first step is to identify the hazards in your workplace that could harm people. However, when you work in a place everyday it may be easy to overlook some hazards. The following should help make sure you don't miss anything.

- **Walk around** your workplace to see what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Take someone else with you as well, as two pairs of eyes are better than one.
- **Ask people** as others may have noticed something which is not immediately obvious to you.
- **Look at previous Accident and Incident Records** these may highlight less obvious hazards or cases of ill health.
- **Check Manufacturer's instructions** which can help you spot hazards eg. Tippex has a hazard warning label, but if used sensibly the risk is negligible so don't mention it.
- **Think long term health hazards** eg. high levels of noise as well as safety hazards.

STEP 2: DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED AND HOW

Be clear about who might be harmed by each hazard, as it will help you work out how best to manage the risk. Do not list people by name (unless necessary), instead identify groups of people eg. Security staff and how they might be harmed eg. 'Security staff may suffer back injury from repeated lifting of boxes'.

Remember:

- Some workers have particular requirements eg. young workers, new and expectant mothers.
- Not all people are in the workplace all the time eg. cleaners, visitors, contractors, members of the public, students or employees of other organisations who you share the workplace with.

STEP 3: EVALUATE THE RISKS AND DECIDE ON PRECAUTIONS

Having spotted the hazards you then need to evaluate the risk by thinking about what controls you already have in place, how the work is organised and whether what you are already doing to manage the risk is enough. You must also, always ensure your controls satisfy legal requirements, industry standards and any manufacturing guidance etc.

If you then, still feel there are shortfalls, decide how to better control the risk. Apply the principles below when thinking about additional controls, asking yourself in the process if there is a way to eliminate the hazard altogether:

- Try a less risky option eg. use a less hazardous chemical, out source the activity.
- Prevent access to the hazard eg. install guarding, work permit systems.
- Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard eg. put barriers between pedestrians and traffic, set up staff work rotas.
- As a last resort issue PPE eg. footwear, goggles etc.
- Provide welfare facilities eg. first aid and washing facilities to clean off contamination eg. dirt.

And don't be worried, improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For example, placing non-slip material on slippery steps is an inexpensive precaution as is purchasing card already cut to the right size.



STEP 4: RECORD YOUR FINDINGS AND IMPLEMENT THEM

Risk assessments do not have to be perfect but it needs to be suitable and sufficient, in detail appropriate to the level of risk. It must also show:

- A proper check was made.
- All those who might be affected were consulted.
- All the significant hazards were addressed.
- The precautions are reasonable and the remaining risk is low.
- Staff and their representatives were involved in the process.

Risk assessments can be recorded on the University's Risk Assessment Form or a suitable tailored alternative. Each significant finding must be recorded, with information under the relevant heading:

- **What are the dangers / hazards** write down the significant hazards.
- **Who might be harmed and how** identify groups of people who could be affected. Remember those that may not be in the workplace all the time eg. members of public, part time workers.
- **What are you doing already to prevent harm** list what is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring or make any harm less serious.
- **What further action is necessary** list any additional controls needed to reduce the risk 'so far as in reasonably practicable'.
- **How will you put the assessment into action** state who will carry out the action, by when and date when the action is completed.

When writing down your results, keep it simple, for example 'tripping over rubbish: staff, bins provided, staff instructed, weekly housekeeping checks.

You must date the Risk Assessment and inform anyone who is affected by the hazards identified in it and who will need to know about the necessary controls to manage any risk. In addition, keep a copy of the Risk Assessment for future reference and pass a copy to the College / Department H&S Coordinator or Head of College / Department, highlighting any actions which need to be carried out.

Note: It is not a legal requirement, but it is helpful if you also sign the Risk Assessment to keep a record of who produced it in case your help is needed in future eg. updating the Risk Assessment.

STEP 5: REVIEW THE RISK ASSESSMENT AND UPDATE IF NECESSARY

Review the Risk Assessment from time to time and revise if necessary. For example, a significant change in the process eg. new equipment and substances which introduce new hazards.

Note: Make sure the revised Risk Assessment is again communicated to those who will be affected by it and the College / Department H&S Coordinator or Head of College / Department.

It is also important all old Risk Assessments relating to the same activity are removed from use.



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