



# **RISK ASSESSMENTS (GENERAL)**

## **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

Name of Policy:	Risk Assessment (General)
Purpose of the Policy:	Sets out the policy and procedures for undertaking risk assessments in the University
Policy Applies to:	All employees, students, contractors and members of the public
Approved by:	Health & Safety Committee
Responsible for its Updating:	Head of Health & Safety
Final Approval by:	Executive
Policy First Issued:	1998
Date of Approval:	June 2016
Proposed Date of Review:	June 2019

Staffordshire University's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender neutral language, jargon free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This policy is available in alternative formats on request.

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## 1.0 SCOPE

Staffordshire University is committed to the provision of a healthy and safe working environment that inspires and supports academic achievement. The University is a large and complex organisation conducting a wide range of activities over a number of sites. This policy sets out how Staffordshire University will identify and manage risks on and off site that may affect the health and safety of members of staff, students and others that may be affected by our activities.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places the University under an obligation to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of all significant health and safety risks to which employees, students and visitors may be subjected as a result of the work of the University. Such assessments have to be recorded and reviewed.

There is a duty for staff who supervise or manage activities, involving significant risks, to ensure that a suitable and sufficient assessment of those risks is carried out in a systematic and structured way. They should ensure that suitable control measures are implemented to control risks.

Risk assessment and control arrangements should also cover non-employees who can foreseeably be affected by University work hazards.

Some areas will have few hazards e.g. offices, others are inherently more dangerous e.g. laboratories and workshops. All hazards need to be considered both on and off campus, but it is only necessary to record the 'significant' findings of an assessment; including any group of employees and others identified by it as being especially at risk. It is not necessary to catalogue every potential hazard.

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

### **RISK ASSESSMENT:**

A risk assessment is a careful examination of how people may be harmed from a particular activity or situation. The assessment will help you to identify the likelihood of harm and whether you can reduce the risk to a reasonable level, through the introduction of control measures.

Although the terms 'hazard' and 'risk' are often used interchangeably, they have specific definitions in health and safety and it is important to understand the distinction.

## HAZARD

This is something with the 'potential to cause harm'. A hazard could be something such as a ladder, a chemical, a particular environment or even simply a particular way of doing the work.

## RISK

This is 'the likelihood of that harm occurring', and the severity of that harm.

## SUITABLE AND SUFFICIENT:

A suitable and sufficient risk assessment is an assessment that is proportionate to the risk and ensures that all relevant hazards are addressed, complies with statutory requirements, ensures all groups who are affected are considered and takes account of existing control measures and identifies further measures as necessary.

## 4.0 COMPETENCY

Staff and others who undertake risk assessments must be competent to do so. This means they should:

- Be familiar with the workplace, machine, process etc. they are assessing, and are able to conduct a comprehensive and thorough review.
- Have received adequate training in how to carry out a risk assessment.
- Have sufficient knowledge, experience and training to enable them to identify the full range of hazards and the precautions required to comply with the law and with university procedures.
- Be able to communicate the results to those people affected by the assessment in a way that enables those people to understand what the risks are, and what they need to do to protect themselves and others.

## 5.0 THE RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Risk Assessment Process	
<b>STEP 1</b> <b>IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walk around your workplace and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ask staff what they think.</li><li>• Visit the HSU and HSE websites for practical guidance, or contact HSU.</li><li>• Check manufacturers' instructions or</li></ul>

<b>The Risk Assessment Process</b>	
	<p>data sheets for chemicals &amp; equipment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a look back at your accident and ill-health records.</li> <li>• Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (e.g. high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances) as well as safety hazards.</li> </ul>
<b>STEP 2 DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED AND HOW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify groups of people who might be harmed.</li> <li>• Remember that some workers have particular requirements, e.g. new and young workers and students, new or expectant mothers, people with disabilities, people for whom English is a second language.</li> <li>• Remember cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers, etc. who may not be in the workplace all the time, and members of the public.</li> <li>• If you share your workplace, think about how your work might affect others.</li> <li>• Talk to staff and ask if they can think of anyone you may have missed.</li> </ul>
<b>STEP 3 EVALUATE THE RISKS AND DECIDE ON PRECAUTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide what you have to do to protect people from harm so far as 'reasonably practicable' by comparing what you are currently doing, or planning to do, doing with good practice. Don't assume that your current controls are effective because nothing has happened (yet).</li> <li>• Consider: Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely? Think 'what if'. Plan for something going wrong.</li> </ul>

<b>The Risk Assessment Process</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- try a less risky option (e.g. switch to using a less hazardous chemical)</li> <li>- prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by guarding, barriers, etc.)</li> <li>- organise work to reduce exposure or the numbers of people likely to be exposed (e.g. issue personal protective equipment such as clothing, footwear, goggles, etc.) and provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>STEP 4 RECORD YOUR FINDINGS AND IMPLEMENT THEM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write down the results of your risk assessment. You need to be able to show that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a proper check has been made</li> <li>- you asked who might be affected</li> <li>- you dealt with all the significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved</li> <li>- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low</li> <li>- you involved your staff or their representatives in the process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Make an action plan to deal with the most important improvement actions first.</li> </ul>
<b>STEP 5 REVIEW YOUR RISK ASSESSMENT AND UPDATE IF NECESSARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review what you are doing on an ongoing basis, ideally annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Check for new equipment, substances, procedures or changes in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The Risk Assessment Process	
	<p>staff that could lead to new risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are there improvements you still need to make?</li> <li>- Have your workers spotted a problem?</li> <li>- Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is a significant change, don't wait for the annual review to amend your risk assessment.</li> <li>• If you're planning future changes to how you work, or introducing new work activities, think about the risk assessment in parallel and try to design out hazards.</li> </ul>

## 6.0 HAZARD RISK CONTROL

6.1. The selection and implementation of the most appropriate method of risk or hazard control is crucial to any success in reducing the risk of injury or ill-health to persons affected by work activities. A hierarchy of control options is listed but it may be necessary to implement a number of these measures in combination to adequately reduce the risk. The list is not exhaustive:

- Elimination (e.g. buying ready sawn timber rather than use a circular saw).
- Substitution by something less hazardous.
- Total enclosure (enclose it in a way that eliminates or controls the hazard, i.e. processing hazardous substances in an enclosed piped system).
- Partial enclosure. The use of LEV systems, fume cupboards, etc.
- Guarding/segregation of people.
- Permit to work systems, e.g. Hot Work Permit to control fire risks.
- Reduce the period of exposure.
- Written procedures that are known and understood by those affected.
- Adequate supervision.

- Adequate training for staff and students.
- Information/instruction (signs, labels, hand-outs).
- Personal protective equipment (PPE).

6.2. The use of PPE should be regarded as a last resort option in the absence of any more reliable or permanent means of control.

6.3. All these measures should be considered within the overall context of achieving 'a safe system of work' that reduces the risk to an acceptable level.

## 7.0 EVALUATING THE RISK AND SETTING PRIORITIES

7.1. The risk assessment should enable Schools/Services to prioritise remedial measures. In many cases it will be clear that some risks require attention before others. Where there is uncertainty a risk rating may be attributed to each identified hazard. The factors relating to **severity** and **likelihood** of harm are given a numerical value and then multiplied together to give a risk rating which can then be used to prioritise remedial actions.

**RISK = HAZARD SEVERITY X LIKELIHOOD/PROBABILITY OF OCCURRENCE**

HAZARD SEVERITY SCALE	
<b>1. Insignificant</b>	Very minor injury, bruise, graze, no risk of disease.
<b>2. Minor</b>	Minor injury, which would allow the individual to continue work after first aid treatment on site or at a local surgery. The duration of the stoppage or treatment is such that the normal flow of work is not seriously interrupted.
<b>3. Moderate</b>	Temporary disability causing injury or disease capable of keeping an individual off work for seven days or more and reportable under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013).
<b>4. High</b>	Causing, serious injury or permanent disability to an individual.
<b>5. Very High</b>	Causing death.

<b>LIKELIHOOD SCALE</b>	
<b>1. Very Unlikely</b>	There is really no risk present. Only under freak conditions could there be any possibility of an accident or illness. All reasonable precautions have been taken.
<b>2. Unlikely</b>	This incident or illness might occur but the probability is low and the risk minimal.
<b>3. Possible</b>	The accident may occur if additional factors precipitate it, but it is unlikely to happen without them.
<b>4. Likely</b>	Will happen more often than not. Additional factors could precipitate an incident but it is still likely to happen without this additional factor.
<b>5. Almost certain</b>	If the work continues as it is, there is almost 100% certainty that an accident will happen.

<b>RISK SCALE</b>	
<b>Acceptable Risk</b>	No additional controls are required. Consideration may be given to a more cost- effective solution or improvement that imposes no additional cost burden. Monitoring is required to ensure that controls are maintained.
<b>Tolerable Risk</b>	Efforts should be made to reduce the risk, but the costs of prevention should be carefully measured and limited. Risk reduction measures should be implemented within a defined time period. Where the moderate risk is associated with extremely harmful consequences, further assessment may be necessary to establish more precisely the likelihood of harm as a basis for determining the need for improved control measures.
<b>Substantial Risk</b>	The event should not be started until the risk has been reduced. Considerable resources may have to be allocated to reduce the risk. Where the risk involves work in progress, urgent action should be taken.
<b>Intolerable Risk</b>	The event must not be started or continued until the risk has been reduced. If it is not possible to reduce the risk even with unlimited resources, work has to remain prohibited.

## MATRIX

<b>Severity Likelihood</b>	Insignificant (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Serious (4)	Fatal / Critical (5)
Almost Certain (5)	Tolerable (5)	Substantial (10)	Substantial (15)	Intolerable (20)	Intolerable (25)
Likely (4)	Acceptable (4)	Tolerable (8)	Substantial (12)	Intolerable (16)	Intolerable (20)
Possible (3)	Acceptable (3)	Tolerable (6)	Tolerable (9)	Substantial (12)	Substantial (15)
Unlikely (2)	Acceptable (2)	Acceptable (4)	Tolerable (6)	Tolerable (8)	Substantial (10)
Rare (1)	Acceptable (1)	Acceptable (2)	Acceptable (3)	Acceptable (4)	Tolerable (5)

It is important to note that analysing the likelihood and severity of harm is not the 'be-all and end-all' of risk assessment. The analysis is only a systematic way of ensuring that likelihood and severity are considered. Neither is the system illustrated above the only way of rating risk; it has been used purely as an example.

**It should be remembered that accidents and ill-health cost money, whilst safety, properly managed, saves money.**