Risk Assessment Code of Practice

1. Introduction

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to carry out an assessment of the significant risks to the health and safety of their employees or others who may be affected.
Assessing and eliminating or reducing risks is the most effective way to provide a safe and healthy working environment.

2. Who should carry out a risk assessment?

The University Health and Safety Policy states that each Head of School or Director of Division is directly responsible to the Vice Chancellor or Registrar for all aspects of safety and is, therefore, responsible for ensuring that these risk assessments are carried out.

The Head of School or Director of Division may delegate the task of carrying out the risk assessments covered by this procedure; but the overall responsibility for ensuring that the assessments are carried out cannot be delegated.

Where risk assessments are to be carried out by unit staff, the Head of School or Director of Service should ensure that staff are competent to carry out the assessments.

In most aspects of work it would be unusual for a single individual to possess adequate knowledge to perform a satisfactory assessment of all work activities. Usually, the person best qualified to carry out the assessment is the person with most knowledge of that activity, i.e. the academic in charge of an experimental project or the line manager responsible for a particular job, in conjunction with the members of staff undertaking the activity.

Remember, risk assessments are subjective and providing you have knowledge of the task to be assessed, you are capable of carrying out a risk assessment.

If you require assistance using the risk assessment forms, contact your Health and Safety Coordinator; your Line Manager or the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Department.

3. What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of, what in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions to prevent harm or whether there is still more you could do.
The aim is to make sure that no-one gets hurt or becomes ill. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives.

The important things you need to decide are whether a hazard is significant and whether you have covered it by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small.

For example: electricity can kill but the risk of doing so in an office environment is remote, provided that “live” components are insulated and metal casings properly earthed.

Record your findings on the University risk assessment form

3. To carry out the assessment:

- Look for the hazards that could cause harm, (use the checklist as a prompt)
- Determine the risk, that is - what could go wrong
- Decide who might be harmed and how many people this may affect
- Identify any existing controls you may already have in place
- Score the risk with the existing controls in place
- If you haven’t taken adequate precautions, list what else you think may be needed and the priority
- Decide who needs to do what
- Score the risk again with the additional controls in place
- Sign off any completed actions
- Review periodically or when the work situation changes to ensure the assessment remains up to date
- List any documents which are relevant to the assessment, e.g. work procedures training records, etc.

4. Look for the hazards - something which could cause harm:

Don’t make it more complicated that it needs to be. In most areas the hazards are few and simple. Checking is common sense, but necessary. You probably already know whether, for example, you have machinery that could cause harm or a stair where someone could get hurt. If so, check that you have taken what reasonable precautions you can to prevent injury. Ignore the trivial, concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people. Ask your staff what they think - they may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious.

5. Determine the risks - what could go wrong:

Look at the hazard and ask the question, “What could go wrong?” It is important at this stage to identify the potential consequences as this will help you score the assessment later.

6. Decide who might be harmed:

Remember to include people who are not employed by you but could be at risk e.g. students, visitors, contractors working on site, etc.
For young people or pregnant workers - see specific guidance in the procedures for young people and pregnant workers.

7. List the existing controls:

You will probably find for a number of risks that you already take precautions to minimise the risk. For example most machinery, vehicles and equipment will have

guarding in place and be subject to a regular maintenance programme. If so list this down.

8. Scoring the risk

Look at the activity being carried out: what is the chance of something going wrong? If something did go wrong, what would be the outcome? Read from the table to determine the risk score. This will enable you to determine what action you need to take depending on whether the risk is insignificant, low, medium, high or critical.

9. Identify additional controls:

Ask yourself if there is any more that you need to do. For example, if you maintain the equipment regularly, do you give staff proper training? If not, list it as an additional control required.

10. Scoring the remaining risk

Once the additional controls have been completed for any risks classed as medium, high or critical, you will need to score again to ensure that the additional controls have reduce the risk to a level which is now acceptable (low or insignificant).

11. Suitable & Sufficient - Not Perfect!

Your risk assessments need to be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made
- you asked who might be affected
- you dealt with all the obvious hazards, taking into account the number of people who may be involved
- the precautions are reasonable and the remaining risk is low

Keep a written record of the findings of your assessment: this can be done on the University risk assessment form.

12. Review your assessment:

The assessment should be reviewed at least annually or if the work situation changes, e.g. new staff, new machinery, new procedures, etc. You do not need to amend your assessment for every trivial change.

13. Following the risk assessment

The controls you identify in your assessment, including any written system of work, MUST be put into practice for the assessment to be effective and to comply with the regulations.

14. Getting help:

If you are still at a loss after reading this guidance, contact your Health and Safety Coordinator or the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Department for more help.

The list of suggested hazards below is to be used as a prompt to make you think about the types of hazards and the consequences. This is not a complete list of all possible hazards or risks.

Hazard - something which could do you or someone else some harm	**Risk** - what could go wrong and the consequences
Storage of objects above head height	Objects could fall onto people causing head injuries or other impact injuries
Stairs/steps **Changes in levels** **Floor surface defects**	People could fall resulting in strain/sprains, broken bones, head injuries, or death
Manual handling	Muscle strains from improper lifting/lifting object too heavy or large Dropping load resulting in foot injuries, strain/sprains and spillage of contents Tripping whilst carrying load resulting in strain/sprains, lacerations or broken bones.
Electrical equipment	Contact with live components could result in electric shock/burns, death etc. Failure of equipment or contact with live components could cause a fire
Visual display screen equipment (VDU)	Muscle strains from improper set up of workstation. Eye sight deterioration from prolonged use.
Moving vehicles (vans, cars, minibuses, fork lift trucks, wagons, tractors, mowers, etc)	Entrapment causing crush injuries, amputation or death Crushing by the vehicle causing serious injuries/amputation or death Impact causing severe injuries or death Overturning causing injuries to driver. Trauma/stress for driver observing accident/injuries.
Glassware	Severe laceration from broken glassware Possible poisoning/toxic effects from contaminated glassware
Hazardous substances	Poisoning or toxic effects Burns to skin, eyes or respiratory system Longer term health condition
Sharp object such as needle or scalpel	Puncture wound resulting in infection from the contaminated sharp.
Working in excessive heat	Heat exhaustion, fainting/nausea, etc
Working in excessive cold	Hypothermia, dexterity problems
People or Animals (Members of the public, vicious dogs, other staff)	Could be aggressive or violent causing injury from physical assault, dog bites, etc.
Lifting equipment (Cranes, hoists, passenger lifts)	Falling objects from cranes & hoists could fall onto people below causing head injuries, impact injuries or death Overturning of crane or hoist could result in operator being injured/killed or impact of persons in vicinity causing crush injuries or death. Lift failure resulting in people being trapped and panic or trauma. Entrapment during maintenance activities resulting in crush injuries or death

Scaffold	People could fall from scaffold resulting in impact injuries, head injuries, broken bones, or death. Objects could fall onto people below causing impact injuries, head injuries, broken bones, or death. Scaffold could collapse resulting in impact injuries, head injuries, broken bones, or death to people on scaffold and below. Contact with overhead cables resulting in electrocution.
Working at Height or using Ladders	Objects could fall onto people below resulting in impact injuries, head injuries, broken bones or death People could fall from height resulting in impact injuries, head injuries or death. Contact with overhead cables by ladders resulting in electrocution.
Excessive/Very Loud Noise	Hearing damage from over exposure to loud noise
Vibration	Hand/Arm damage from over exposure to excessive vibration levels
Confined space	Asphyxiation from lack of oxygen or build up of toxic gas resulting in confusion, unconsciousness or death
Pressurised systems compressed air, gas bottles, steam pipes, etc	Explosion resulting in major deaths Release of product at high pressure resulting in amputation, puncture wounds, embolism, or death
Working near water	Hypothermia, or drowning
Other	Please state

This list is not exhaustive please add other hazards and risks that apply to your working environment.