

Risk Assessment Policy

Introduction

Risk Assessments are used to identify safe working practices and the action necessary to implement them. The techniques of risk assessment required under the *Management of Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1999* should be applied primarily to those significant hazards arising from exposure to work activities, equipment and processes.

A similar risk assessment approach will need to be used in respect of specific issues, eg manual handling and fire. A list of regulations that specifically require risk assessments is included in Appendix I and specific policies can be found on Metis.

Physical conditions of premises, offices and other buildings are covered by the *Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (WHSW)*. These regulations are prescriptive in terms of the physical / environmental conditions of workplaces and are normally addressed by active monitoring in the form of the periodic workplace inspections.

Similarly, hazards associated with temporary workplaces, which could give rise to serious and imminent danger should be subject to a specific risk assessment. Examples might include work at height and work in confined spaces.

For a risk assessment to be considered "suitable and sufficient", it must identify the risks from the work activities and enable a manager to identify and prioritise the measures which are needed to ensure that the relevant statutory provisions are complied with. It must be appropriate to the nature of the work and such that it remains valid for a reasonable period of time. The complexity of the risk assessment will be commensurate with the complexity of the activity, eg the risks associated with changing a tap washer should be simple and straightforward compared to that of a boiler replacement, or, teaching in a standard classroom environment to a cadet force outward bound activity camp.

Risk assessments must be reviewed if developments suggest that it may no longer be valid or can be improved in some way. In most cases, it is recommended that an annual review takes place but the time between reviews will vary according to the nature of the risk and the degree of change likely in the work activity. Such reviews should form part of standard management practice. Any assessments must be reviewed if there are significant changes to personnel, materials used, equipment, location or task activities; or following any incident, event or near miss that may indicate that the existing control measures are inadequate.

It should be noted that other risk assessments may be required to meet the requirements of other groups, bodies or organisations, eg general risk management, disability, industry practice, etc. Whilst some of the principles of risk assessment described in this policy may apply to these, reference should be made to documentation relating to such assessments to ensure compliance with specified standards.

Responsibilities

Heads of department and line managers will:

- ensure that arrangements are in place for implementing this policy, through department-specific guidance on its application
- ensure that key staff (to be trained as necessary) are competent to carry out and / or interpret generic and / or specific risk assessments for activities within their sphere of control
- have systems in place for the periodic monitoring of the implementation of this policy
- implement and monitor this policy and associated documentation
- ensure that risk assessments are only carried out by competent persons with practical knowledge of the work activities
- give staff and representative (including accredited trade union representatives) the opportunity to participate in the risk assessment process

- ensure that risk assessments and their associated control measures are incorporated into safe working practices, implemented and reflected in targeted safety training
- ensure that staff and representatives (including accredited trade union) affected are made aware of the outcome of risk assessments in so far as they apply to them and ensure that staff comply with the associated safe working practices
- particularly ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out for young persons, new and expectant mothers, and persons with disabilities, and any other employees who may be subjected to specific hazards, eg lone working.

Employees will:

- ensure that safe working practices, resulting from risk assessments, are fully understood and complied with
- advise their line manager of any perceived needs for training or instruction in those practices and of any circumstances that might require new or revised risk assessments
- use a dynamic risk assessment approach themselves during the normal course of their work, and exercise reasonable care and self-awareness whilst carrying out their work activities on or off College premises.

Definitions

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a careful examination of anything in the workplace that could cause people to suffer injury or ill health while they are at work.

Hazard

Anything that has the potential to cause harm, in terms of personal injury, ill health or property damage. A hazardous event takes place when someone or something interacts with the hazard and allows it to cause harm.

Likelihood

Likelihood is a measure of the chance of the hazardous event will occur.

Consequence

The consequence is the outcome of the hazardous event.

Risk

The assessment of risk combines the *likelihood* of the hazard causing harm together with the *consequence* of the event.

Control Measures

Control measures are subdivided into:

Workplace Precautions

The practical measures / precautions relating to people, equipment, substances, etc specified to manage or control the risk.

Risk Control Systems

The systems required to provide, implement and maintain the workplace precautions.

Types of Risk Assessment

HoDs and managers are required to assess foreseeable risks and reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

There are typically three different types of risk assessment:

- generic risk assessments
- specific risk assessments
- dynamic assessments.

A **generic risk assessment** is a process which acknowledges that most hazards faced by any particular group of staff during the course of their work are common to all of them wherever they work. This can be the starting point for risk assessment, to aim for a consistent approach whereby key tasks required of such groups of staff are noted, the associated hazards identified and the corresponding risks evaluated. The next stage is that generic risk assessments must be "tailored" locally by managers and staff to ensure they reflect their particular work arrangements and locations.

A **specific risk assessment** is a risk assessment of a specific task, situation, issue or person.

A **dynamic risk assessment** is the process whereby everyone continuously adopts a "risk assessment" approach intuitively for a whole range of hazards they face, and the decisions taken to deal with those hazards are based on their safety competency (ie experience and / or training) and capabilities. It would normally only be necessary to document a dynamic risk assessment where such hazards are significant and particularly need to be drawn to the attention of other people.

The Risk Assessment Process

The *HSE Approved Code of Practice to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* highlights the need to identify significant hazards associated with workplaces, procedures, substances, equipment and tasks.

It emphasises the need for management involvement during the assessments, for all aspects of the work activity to be reviewed and not solely the "technical" aspects of the task itself, that those persons or groups who may be affected are identified, and that any existing control measures are taken account of in the assessment.

Specific risk assessments should normally be documented using the methodology described below and using the risk assessment template form in Appendix 2. Some specific assessments, eg COSHH, stress, display screen equipment, manual handling, will need separate documentation on specially designed forms – please refer to the relevant specific College policies for access to these.

Generic risk assessments can be produced for certain work activities / jobs by a person familiar with that work, using the process below:

- the overall job is divided up into its relevant tasks and taking into account those persons at risk, eg employees, new or expectant mothers, students, visitors, contractors, etc.
- the significant hazards are identified for each task
- the level of risk for each hazard has been evaluated using the standard methodology below
- suitable and sufficient control measures are put in place to minimise risk
- the risk assessment template (Appendix 2) is completed, signed and dated
- further control measures are then recommended as appropriate to manage and revise the risk.

Heads of department should make the risk assessment available to all appropriate staff responsible for that particular group or work activity, and representative (including accredited trade union safety representative); and the prioritised action schedule implemented and monitored.

Description of Task / Work Activity

Task analysis / work activity is a process by which relevant activities involved in a job can be identified and listed. A particular job or work activity would be broken down into a series of interrelated tasks; thus providing a reference for an initial generic risk assessment, and for a review in the event of any changes in the job.

The next stage is to break down those main tasks into task steps, again by discussion with appropriate safety representatives, the employee(s) and their line manager; and by the risk assessor's own knowledge of the job. Each task step must be numbered, if necessary in order of priority or sequence, as a cross-reference for the hazard identification process.

Identification and Evaluation of Hazardous Event

Significant hazards with the most potential for harm need to be identified and their frequency and severity judged on the basis of the experience of the risk assessor, employees affected, historical incident data etc, to evaluate the level of risk.

Separately produced risk assessments based on other statutory requirements, eg for manual handling, noise, control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) must, as appropriate, be identified on the generic risk assessment. They do not need to be repeated unless any situations have changed. Where necessary, managers should seek advice from the College health and safety officer or specialist competent advisor for other specific risk assessments such as COSHH, stress, etc.

The aim is to identify significant hazards and not to obscure these by concentrating on trivial matters. Specific statutory requirements can provide a starting point for identifying significant hazards.

Any existing (control) measures must be taken into account and consideration given as to whether they are sufficient and effective.

People Affected

List all groups of people who may be affected by the activity including employees, students, parents, members of the public, etc.

Risk Priority Rating – Likelihood and Consequence

The risk priority rating determines the level of risk associated with the activity / task or area. In order to determine the risk priority rating, the likelihood is multiplied by the severity. The likelihood is based on the background information you have collected eg number of incidents / near misses; the people who may be affected (their level of vulnerability, etc) and the control measures already in place to minimise the level of risk. You are then asking yourself a question – how likely is it that harm will occur? The level of severity has usually been decided in the consequence of hazard. The only time that the level of severity is changed is if the control measures in place will prevent that level of severity occurring eg a fall from a second storey roof will be classed as disability or death for the consequence of hazard but if the control measures in place include a fall arrest system or fencing around the roof area, the fall will become a “slip” and the consequence will then more likely be a minor injury, etc.

The assessor should assign values for the 'likelihood' of a hazardous event occurring (a) and the severity of the 'consequence' of that hazardous event (b). By multiplying 'a' and 'b' together you get the **Risk Level**.

Likelihood of Occurrence (a)		Severity of Impact (b)	
1 -	Very unlikely (1 in a million chance)	1 -	Insignificant (no injury)
2 -	Unlikely (1 in 100,000 chance)	2 -	Minor (minor injury, 1 st aid)
3 -	Fairly likely (1 in 10,000 chance)	3 -	Moderate (up to 3 days absence)
4 -	Likely (1 in 1,000 chance)	4 -	Major (more than 3 days absence)
5 -	Very Likely (1 in 100 chance)	5 -	Catastrophic (death)

Risk Level

The thick black line is the “line of tolerance”. Those risks that are plotted above the line (score 1 - 9) are “out of tolerance”. Risks falling within the 17 to 25 red area will require immediate action whilst those within the orange area (10 to 16) should be addressed within three to six months.

LIKELIHOOD	Very Likely 5	5	10	15	20	25
	Likely 4	4	8	12	16	20
	Feasible 3	3	6	9	12	15
	Slight 2	2	4	6	8	10
	Very unlikely 1	1	2	3	4	5
		Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Significant 3	Major 4	Critical 5
CONSEQUENCE						

Unacceptable (17 to 25)
Tolerable (score 10 to 16)
Adequate (score 5 to 9)
Acceptable (score 1 to 4)

Stop activity and make immediate improvement
Look to improve within specified timescale
Look to improve at next review
No further action, but ensure controls are maintained

Existing Control Measures

The final stage of the risk assessment process is to consider the appropriate workplace precautions and risk control systems required, including a review and reinforcement of existing working practices, and proposing changes if appropriate.

List the procedures, systems, etc that are in place to minimise all of the hazards. All relevant hazards must be reviewed in order to ensure that control measures have been put in place to minimise the level of risk.

Use the following hierarchy of control measures to manage the hazard. Starting with the first control, is it possible to eliminate the hazard by doing the activity differently? If you cannot eliminate the hazard then move to the next measure, reduce the hazard. Work your way through the hierarchy until you are satisfied that you have controlled, where practicable, all foreseeable hazards. Note, the wearing of PPE should be the last control measure, once all others have been considered.

1. Eliminate the hazard
2. Reduce the hazard
3. Prevent contact
4. Adopt safe systems of work
5. Wear protective personal equipment (PPE)

Consider whether the control measures are adequate? For example, supervision levels, testing of equipment, etc.

The outcome of the risk assessment incorporating the necessary control measures must be actioned and communicated to those affected, including any representatives (eg trade union). Maintaining risk control measures requires on-going supervision and compliance with safe working practices and periodic monitoring.

Further Control Measures

Should the risk level exceed the “line of tolerance” with existing control measures then consider whether the level of risk acceptable. A task or work activity that falls within the “red area” should be stopped and immediate improvements made to decrease the level of risk.

Decisions regarding the implementation of the further risk control measures should be recorded and the form updated as these are dealt with.

Young People and Risk Assessments

The risk assessment must take into account the likely inexperience, lack of awareness of risks and immaturity of young persons. Specific factors to be addressed should include:

- the layout of the workplace and / or workstation
- the nature, degree and duration of exposure to any chemicals or biological agents
- the type and method of use of any work equipment
- their involvement in service provision and interaction with others (eg whilst on work experience)
- the relevant safety training and induction to be provided

If the risk assessment indicates that the work or activity, or part of it, presents a high risk to any young person then they must be prohibited from undertaking such work. Where they are undertaking work appropriate for their training, work

experience, etc, and are under proper supervision by a competent member of staff and provided the risks are reduced as far as reasonably practicable, this restriction need not apply.

Young persons must be told about risks to their health and safety and the measures put in place to control them.

Young persons' work should be monitored regularly to ensure that the control measures are implemented and effective.

Review Arrangements

All risk assessments should be regularly reviewed (usually on an annual basis by the Health and safety officer) and the date(s) for review should be noted on the form in the appropriate box.

It is recommended that a new assessment form is completed after a period of three years as it is likely that there will have been some significant changes which require identification and re-assessment.

You should keep a copy of the risk assessment on file, record that copies have been disseminated to appropriate members of staff and check to make sure it has been received and is understood. Finally, send a copy of the risk assessment to the Health and safety officer for inclusion in the *Health and Safety Manual* on Metis.

Appendix I: Regulations Which Require Assessment

Manual Handling Operations Regulations

Where it is not reasonably practicable to avoid manual handling, assess with regard to risk factors - task, load, working environment, individual capability.

Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations

Assess the risk to health and safety to which users and operators are exposed to as a consequence of using their computer workstation.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Work Regulations

Assess risk to health and safety which have not been avoided by other means. Assessment includes definition of characteristics which the PPE must have in order to be effective against the risks. A comparison should be made between the characteristics of the PPE available with the required characteristics to control the risk.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

Assess risks to health resulting from work which involves exposure to substances hazardous to health. Assessment to include steps that need to be taken to comply with other requirements of the regulations; eg prevention / control of exposure, storage, information / instruction training.

Noise at Work Regulations

Assessment to be undertaken where staff are likely to be exposed to the first action level or above 85dB(A) or peak action level 200 Pascal's.

Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations

Assessment required before any work begins to identify whether there is a risk of exposure and steps to reduce exposure to lowest level reasonable practicable.

Control of Lead at Work Regulations

Assessment to determine the nature and degree of the exposure to lead.

Appendix 2: Risk Assessment Template

Risk Assessment Form

Activity:			
Venue / location:		Assessment date:	

Description of task / work activity	Hazardous event	People affected Occupation and number	Likelihood (a) / Consequence (b)	Risk Level a x b = risk level	Existing controls	Further risk controls required
			a) b)			
			a) b)			
			a) b)			
			a) b)			
			a) b)			
			a) b)			

(Copy and paste further rows as appropriate)

Assessor name: Job Title:	Signed:	Date: Review date:
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