
HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE NOTE: **HSGN 4**

RISK ASSESSMENTS

INDEX

1. Objective
2. Background
3. Definitions
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. When to carry out a Risk Assessment
6. Authorisation of a Risk Assessment
7. Naming Convention, saving the Risk Assessment
8. Reviewing the Risk Assessment

Appendix 1

Guidance and help for carrying out a risk assessment

1. **Objective**

The objective of this Guidance Note is to provide information on the use of risk assessments as a tool to reduce and manage risks across the University.

2. **Background**

Carrying out a risk assessment is a strict legal requirement, i.e. where there is a significant risk to persons or property a risk assessment needs to be written and adhered to. When used correctly a risk assessment is an excellent method for eliminating and / or mitigating the risks associated with work activities.

3. **Definitions**

3.1 Hazard

A Hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm: e.g. inclement weather, moving vehicles, alcohol, poor housekeeping, chemicals etc.

3.2 Hazardous Event

A hazardous event is an unplanned or unwanted event: e.g. a fire, slip, trip, fall, damage to equipment, an injury etc.

3.3 Risk

Risk is the likelihood of a hazardous event occurring. The higher the risk the more likely it is that a hazardous event could occur. Risk also considers the outcome of a hazardous event, for example if there is the possibility of a fatality then the risk is higher than the possibility of fractures from a minor fall. Risk is judgement based.

3.4 Significant Hazard

A Significant Hazard or Risk is one in which loss or harm occurring is (at least) fairly likely and so the hazards will need to be risk assessed and controlled to prevent, or mitigate, the chance of a hazardous event occurring.

3.5 Controls

A control is a measure or action necessary to eliminate or mitigate the risk associated with an activity or part of an activity (see section c of Appendix 1 for more information).

3.6 Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment is the process of assessing the hazards associated with a process or event, in order to be able to decide on what controls are needed eliminate or mitigate the risks involved. Risk assessments must be recorded and reviewed as necessary.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The **Senior Management Team** drives and guides the effective implementation of the policy as senior executive officers.

4.2 **Heads of Unit / Schools** must:

- Cooperate with University policies
- Ensure that staff under their management comply with University policies and stay abreast of any changes
- Help to compile and maintain a bank of applicable risk assessments within their area
- Are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out within their unit

4.3 The **Executive Head of Property and Technical Services** coordinates activities between the Campus Managers at each site.

4.4 The **Head of Health and Safety** coordinates the operation of health and safety across the University and is responsible for supporting staff in their duties.

4.5 **Campus Managers** should coordinate with ancillary staff to ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out.

4.6 **ALL University Staff**:

- Cooperate with the University and support its policies and procedures on health and safety
- Carry out a risk assessment where there is a significant risk of harm occurring to staff, students or others
- Disseminate the information on a risk assessment to those persons that could be affected by it, e.g. staff, students etc
- Review the risk assessment whenever necessary (see section e of Appendix 1 for more information)
- Bring to the attention of managers any situation or practice that may lead to injuries or work related ill-health

5 When to carry out a Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be written where there is a significant chance of harm, or loss, occurring to a staff member, student, visitor or contractor. A risk assessment is important because it helps a department to plan ways to eliminate or mitigate the hazards associated with an activity. A risk assessment will contain details for any further action that is needed in order to make the activity safer. Anyone can carry out a risk assessment, but for further help contact the University's Health and Safety department for advice.

To obtain copies of up to date risk assessment templates please visit the Health and Safety Staff Portal via MyDay.

6 Authorisation of the Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be authorised by someone in a position of authority who is familiar with the activity or event and the risk assessment process. Commonly this is

carried out by the Head of School or the Assistant Dean – but it is not limited to these people. Risk assessment documentation cannot be authorised by the person that drafted the risk assessment.

Before signing off the risk assessment the person authorising it should check that all of the significant hazards are present and that the proposed control measures are reasonable. If there is any doubt regarding the contents of a risk assessment then internal departmental discussions should take place to reach a solution where all key members involved in drafting / countersigning risk assessments are happy with the contents. In situations where agreement is not reached it should be escalated to Heads of Unit or the Health and Safety Department for assistance.

7 Naming convention, saving the Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be saved and placed in a folder on the University's shared drive so that it is accessible to key personnel within the University for auditing and quality purposes.

The file name given to the risk assessment should be chosen so that the risk assessment is easily identifiable and searchable for auditing purposes, for example a risk assessment for a field trip to Pembrey Circuit carried out on the 18th May 2015 that has some outstanding actions should be saved as:

"RA_field_trip_pembrey_18_5_15_N"

The letter at the end denotes whether the risk assessment is complete or not:

N – Incomplete, there are outstanding actions to complete

Y – Complete, there are no outstanding actions

8 Reviewing the Risk Assessment

The risk assessment must be reviewed periodically; normally the review will be dictated by any actions that are outstanding, for example if an action is to be completed in three months then the risk assessment review date should be three months from the date it was written. A log must be kept of when all risk assessments are to be reviewed.

Risk assessments may also be reviewed before the review date in circumstances including (but not confined to):

- New equipment or a different way of doing things
- An accident
- A near miss or an issue with the activity event
- A recommendation to bring the review date forward by the H&S department
- A recommendation to bring the review date forward by an external auditor, local authority, HSE etc
- An issue that arises with the current way of doing things
- A change in legislation or guidance

Appendix 1

The steps for carrying out a risk assessment:

a. Identify the hazards

The first aspect of your risk assessment is to identify all of the significant hazards associated with the activity; hazards are anything with the potential to cause harm. This step is important and it is good practice to ask others what they think the hazards are, as they may notice things that are not obvious to you and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks.

b. Decide who might be harmed?

Then think about who might be harmed, for example: employees (or others who may be present) and people such as students or visitors. Also remember to take members of the public into account if they could be harmed by your work activities.

c. Describe the Controls

Having identified the hazards, you then have to describe how the hazards will be controlled. Generally, you need to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. You do not need to take actions that would be considered to be grossly disproportionate to the level of risk. Choosing what controls to use is often a decision that needs to be made collectively within a department.

d. Describe any further Controls / Actions Needed

Look at what you're already doing and the control measures you already have in place. Ask yourself: Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? Or, can I do anything further to gain greater control over the risks so that harm is very unlikely? Some practical steps you could take include: trying a less risky option; preventing access to the hazards; organising your work to reduce exposure to the hazard; issuing protective equipment; providing welfare facilities such as first aid and washing facilities; involving and consulting with workers or issues safety training to staff / students. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

If there are any further controls or actions required make sure you document who will implement them and when they will be completed by. Remember to update the risk assessment once further actions have been implemented.

e. Regularly review your risk assessment

New equipment, substances or procedures can lead to new hazards. In order to keep activities safe it is necessary to review risk assessments on an ongoing basis, look at your risk assessment again and ask yourself: Have there been any significant changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have your students spotted a problem? Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses? Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

If you carry out a number of similar activities, you can produce a model risk assessment reflecting the common hazards and risks associated with these activities.

Document Version Control

Document Reference: Health & Safety Guidance Note HSGN 4

Document title: Risk Assessments

Version:	5.0
Date of Update	3 rd February 2016
Reason for update	New policy format, University logo and job titles
Review Date:	April 2017 (may be updated prior to this date in response to statutory or organisational requirements).
Relevant Legislation:	Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)
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