

## **Introduction**

Risk assessments are central to managing health and safety in the University, and this guidance provides practical information on how to carry out risk assessments and risk assessment logs.

A risk assessment can help you organise and manage risks in three stages:

1. Identifying underlining hazards
2. logically determining the risk of harm
3. Considering what could be done to reduce or eliminate that risk

A main principle of risk assessments is they should take place before any changes are made. Risks should be assessed and control measures put into action before new work is introduced or systems are changed. The process should influence budgets and allocation of resources, rather than being an afterthought when the decisions have already been made.

## **Risk assessment overview**

### **Whose responsibility is it to manage the risk assessment process?**

The regulation of tasks in schools and services means mainly managers are responsible for ensuring risk assessments are in place. They must ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out and regularly reviewed, and that records are kept for work in their areas of responsibility.

Risk assessment tasks may be delegated as long as the risk assessor is competent.

### **What should be risk assessed?**

Risk assessments must be carried out for all work that includes significant risks. Trivial risks can be ignored. You can learn more about what risks to assess later in this guidance.

### **How often should the assessment be reviewed?**

Risk assessments must be reviewed regularly:

- Every two years as a minimum
- Immediately following a serious incident or where there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid.

### **What should be recorded?**

The process does not have to be complex or sophisticated, but significant findings must be recorded. Written assessments recognise the fact that risks exist, and identify appropriate control measures. This is a basis for making work safer and provides evidence of any steps taken.

### **Which form should I use?**

The corporate risk assessment form is the minimum standard required, but several other forms are available for more specific risks. Recording and presenting assessments in this consistent format is beneficial as they can be compared easily,

and as assessments produced by different assessors are in the same format, this makes the interpretation of findings more straightforward. You can learn more about forms later in this guidance.

### **Protective and preventative measures**

Control measures can be preventative (to prevent the hazard arising in the first place) or protective (to protect employees from existing hazards). Of course, measures identified in the risk assessment must be put into action if the process is to have any value.

Risk assessments can produce a number of possible control measures but the final decision is a trade off between the level of risk, cost and the time and effort of applying the control. It is crucial to choose and implement the most appropriate method of risk control.

The choice of control should be guided by the hierarchy of risk control principles:

1. Elimination
2. Substitution
3. Isolation
4. Reduction
5. Information, instruction, training and supervision
6. Personal protective equipment.

Where more than one option is available for a similar degree of risk control, consider which is the most cost effective option. You can find more information about the hierarchy of risk control later in this guidance.

In the event of an accident or incident, the relevant risk assessments will be scrutinised. Failure to implement control measures without adequate documented justification (or failure to ensure that risk assessments are carried out at all) could be highlighted as a potential contributory factor in the incident.

**If the risk assessor is not the manager, it is still the manager's responsibility to take decisions based on the findings of the assessments and to implement those decisions.**