Department
SHEW

Risk Assessment

Guidance for Completing Risk Assessments (Code of Practice)

Document Information

Author	Chris Young, HTR Deputy Director: Safety and Wellbeing Services, University Safety, Health and Employee Wellbeing Service (SHEW).				
Revised By					
Date	01/12/2025	Version	1	Status	Approved. Review December 2028

Contents

1. Summary 3
2. Scope 3
3. Introduction 4
4. Key Definitions 4
5. General Requirements 6
6. Roles and Responsibilities 6
7. Identifying Line Managers / Supervisors 8
8. Appendix 1- Risk Assessment Steps 8
9. Appendix 2 RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE 11

1. Summary

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (the “Act”) sets out general duties on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others who may be affected by the employer’s undertakings. This includes duties to provide safe workplaces and safe systems of work, including in the event of emergencies, and to ensure workers have adequate supervision, information, instruction and training to secure their health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by their work.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the “management regulations”) build on the general duties of the Act to place a specific duty on employers to carry out and implement risk assessments which identify, assess and control significant risks associated with their business and related activities.

The University’s Health and Safety Policy sets out its general arrangements to manage the significant risks associated with its undertakings. This Code of Practice describes the arrangements in force at University of Bath to discharge its duties in relation to general risk assessment. Other topic-specific legislation requires specific risk assessments to be undertaken to manage specific hazards. These specific requirements are covered under separate policies, procedures and guidance.

2. Scope

This Code of Practice (CoP) applies to all work activities and to all types of workplaces that are under the control, to any extent, of the University of Bath. This will include all:

- Teaching activities, including teaching and practical classes, student projects and student activities which are supervised to any extent by the University’s employees.
- Research activities, including research activities undertaken on and off campus, including overseas research work.
- Support activities undertaken by Faculty staff, Technicians, Professional Services and others.
- Voluntary and casual work undertaken for the University.
- Activities undertaken by employees, honorary staff, students, contractors, visitors under the control or supervision of the University of Bath.
- Activities that could impact tenants or other people who may be affected by activities in premises under the control of the University of Bath.

Many of the activities noted above will be subject to specific health and safety requirements. This code of practice should therefore be read in conjunction with any other relevant University approved Health and Safety policy, guidance and resources. These can be found on the University’s Safety, Health and Employee Wellbeing (SHEW) webpages.

3. Introduction

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), 40.1 million working days were lost due to work-related ill-health in 2024/25. Over that same period, there were 124 workplace fatalities and 59,219 reportable injuries with the total cost to the UK economy of all workplace accidents in that year estimated at £22.9Bn.

All UK employers are required to carry out risk assessments which identify, assess and control the significant risks associated with their business undertakings. Where employers have five or more employees then the significant findings of their risk assessments must be written down.

Employers are not required to eliminate all risks or for generating paperwork for the sake of it. Risk assessments are not expected to identify and manage trivial risks or to stop learning and research or other activities where risks are appropriately managed. Risk assessment should consider all significant risks and identify proportionate and effective approaches to managing those risks.

4. Key Definitions

Hazard: Anything that has the potential to cause harm.

Risk: The likelihood that the harm could occur.

Risk Assessment: A systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking. It should only include what you could reasonably be expected to know – you are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks. The University has 4 levels of risk assessment:

1. General Risk Assessment – these assessments consider risk at a high level within a specific context. Control measures are general and required in all settings.
2. Generic Risk Assessment – these assessments cover activities or tasks where the risks involved will largely be unchanged wherever and whenever they are carried out. These types of risk assessments can either be **adopted** in whole or **adapted** to suit the specific arrangements or context where the work will take place.
3. Specific Risk Assessment - these assessments cover activities or operations which pose specific risks.
4. Individual Risk Assessment - these assessments consider any specific risks that may disproportionately affect certain individuals if a hazard is realised. This could include people who are doing the work, or other people who may be in the vicinity.

Suitable and Sufficient: There is no absolute legal definition for this term. The risk assessment should show that a proper check has been made and identifies who might be affected and how. It should be reflective of the scale of the work carried out, taking

account of the number of people involved. All obvious significant hazards should be identified, and reasonable control measures applied to reduce the risk to a tolerable level. It should be clear and straightforward to understand. Employees or their representatives should be involved in the process.

"*So far as reasonably practicable*": Balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble. If the difficulty of implementing control measures, or the cost of implementing them is grossly disproportionate to the level of risk reduction they provide, then the control measures would not be considered reasonably practicable".

Significant Risks: Risks that are not trivial in nature and can create a real risk to health and safety which any reasonable person would appreciate and would take steps to guard against. Risk is a part of everyday life, and employers are not expected to eliminate all risks.

Hierarchy of Controls: Risks should be reduced to the **lowest reasonably practicable level** by taking preventative measures, **in order of priority** as follows:

1. Elimination - Redesign the job or replace a substance so that the hazard is removed or eliminated.

2. Substitution - Replace the material or process with a less hazardous one.

3. Engineering controls - for example use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where you cannot avoid working at height, install or use additional machinery to control risks from dust or fume or separate the hazard from operators by methods such as enclosing or guarding dangerous items of machinery/equipment. Give priority to measures that protect collectively over individual measures.

4. Administrative Controls – Identify and implement procedures to work safely. For example: reducing the time workers are exposed to hazards; prohibiting use of mobile phones in hazardous areas; increasing safety signage and performing risk assessments.

5. Personal protective clothes and equipment - Only after all the previous measures have been tried and found ineffective in controlling risks to a reasonably practicable level, must personal protective equipment (PPE) be used. For example, where you cannot eliminate the use of a hazardous substance or use work equipment such as local exhaust ventilation to minimise the exposure (should one occur). If chosen, PPE should be selected and fitted by the person who uses it. Workers must be trained in the function and limitation of each item of PPE.

Competency: There is no legal definition of competency. However, this is generally accepted as meaning a person has the necessary "knowledge, skills, training and experience" to carry out a specific task safely. All people undertaking risk assessments for specific tasks should be able to demonstrate that they are competent to do so. Successful completion of one or more of the University's online risk assessment

training modules is considered as sufficient to demonstrate that the “training” requirement is met.

5. General Requirements

Council as the “employer” is ultimately accountable for health and safety at the University of Bath. Council delegates the day-to-day responsibility for managing health and safety to the Vice-Chancellor, who in turn delegates responsibilities down through lime management chains so that those people who directly supervise or control work activity are responsible for ensuring that any significant risks associated with those activities are appropriately managed.

General Requirements for risk assessments are that:

- All people who are required to carry out risk assessments need to be competent to do so.
- Risk assessments should be completed before any works are commenced. The risk assessment should consider all aspects of a work activity including the context in which the activity will be carried out.
- If the risk assessor concludes that there are no significant risks associated with a team’s works then this should be formally recorded
- The type of assessment used should be appropriate to the activity, the context win which the activity will be done and consider the people who will be doing the task or who may be affected by the task.
- Identified control measures must follow the hierarchy of controls and be implemented before work is allowed to start.
- Risk assessments should consider any emergency measures that might be required should a risk be realised.
- The significant findings of all risk assessments should be written down and communicated to all people who may be affected by the work.
- Risk assessments should ideally be recorded on the University’s risk assessment template. If a different format is used, then this must still meet the statutory requirements around the assessment being “suitable and sufficient”. The steps to be covered are provided in section 8. The template is provided in Appendix 2.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

In all cases, the responsibility for ensuring that risk assessments have been completed lies with the person who directly supervises or directs an activity. However, all levels of the line management structure have responsibilities for ensuring that this requirement has been met. The following responsibilities are in addition to roles and responsibilities described in the University’s Health and Safety Policy.

Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring that they have processes in place to satisfy themselves that within their line management chain:

- People undertaking risk assessments are competent (as per the definition in this CoP).
- Suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been completed for all works that present a significant health and safety risk.
- Control measures satisfy the hierarchy of controls and have been implemented.

Senior managers should have a broad understanding of the risk profile of the areas that fall within their line management chain. SHEW has produced initial risk profiles for all Faculties (including the "School"), departments and Professional Services to assist with this. Senior managers should review (and as necessary revise) this profile at least annually to ensure that it is kept up to date.

Line Managers / Supervisors who directly supervise or manage an activity must ensure that:

- They are competent (as per the definition in this CoP) to undertake risk assessments.
- People undertaking the works are adequately consulted on the hazards and risks involved in their activities and on the contents of any risk assessments.
- Risk assessments have been completed for all activities that they supervise where there is a significant risk to people carrying out the work or to anyone else who may be affected. These must be completed before any work is allowed to commence.
- Risk assessments take account of requirements in other University of Bath health and safety policies, standards and Codes of Practice.
- The level of risk assessment used is appropriate to the work activity, the work context and the people who may be carrying out the work or who may be affected by the work.
- Risk Assessments are written in accordance with this Code of Practice and are "suitable and sufficient".
- The hierarchy of controls is observed, and control measures are properly implemented.
- Risk assessments include all aspects of a task and that suitable emergency arrangements are in place where required.
- Any action plans associated with their risk assessments are completed.
- The significant findings of risk assessments are communicated (see Section 8 for guidance) to all people who may be affected by the works.
- People carrying out the work have the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to carry out work tasks safely.
- Works are periodically monitored to makes sure that these are carried out in accordance with the agreed risk assessment. Where issues with work practices are identified the line manager / supervisor is responsible for ensuring that appropriate corrective actions are taken / implemented.

- Risk assessments are reviewed at appropriate intervals (annually for high-risk works) or following any accident or near-miss or where there has been a significant change in the way that works covered by the risk assessment are carried out (e.g., when new machinery or processes or substances are used).
- Records of risk assessments are kept for at least three years after an activity ceases.

The task of completing risk assessments may be delegated to others that they supervise or manage provided that the people they delegate the task to are competent. **Where this task is delegated, the line manager / supervisor retains responsibility for the risk assessment being "suitable and sufficient".**

7. Identifying Line Managers / Supervisors

The following provides a description of who the line manager / supervisor is in different Education and Research Contexts:

- Research activities / projects (including dedicated lab or workshop spaces) – Principal Investigator.
- Research Institute – Director (Co-Director where these are appointed). Where Co-Directors oversee specific groups then they will have responsibility for the risk assessments for these specific groups.
- Teaching practical sessions, including fieldtrips – Specified Academic in charge of the practical. Technical Managers may need to prepare risk assessments for work undertaken by technicians when setting up the practical.
- Student projects associated with taught modules – Specified academic in charge of the project activity.
- Shared analytical spaces (Faculty) – Technical Manager for the facility, Principal Investigator for the work activity.
- Technical Services support activities – Director(s) of Technical Services.
- Core Research Facilities – Specialist Research Facility Supervisor.

8. Risk Assessment Steps

Step 1 – Identify the hazards

For a risk assessment to be considered "suitable and sufficient", it must consider all foreseeable and significant hazards and risks. There are several practical things you can do to ensure that you have identified all hazards:

- Visit and inspect the work area to identify hazards
- Speak to people who do the work. This will help you to get a better understanding of how a task is actually done and to get an understanding of the hazards that workers feel may be involved in their work.

- Check the SHEW webpages for guidance on hazards and risks. You could also look at other authoritative sources such as the HSE's website.
- Look at other relevant information that might be available, such as labelling on containers or operation manuals for equipment.

Remember to think about other activities that may be related to the work tasks that are carried out, such as cleaning or maintaining work equipment or dealing with any waste materials that might arise.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

Identify who could be harmed by a hazard and how. You will need to consider:

- Those doing the work or who are working near the work.
- Visitors, contactors, students or others who may occasionally be near the work when it is carried out.
- Anyone who is particularly vulnerable or who may be at increased risk, such as someone with a disability, health condition, or who is pregnant or is a "young person".

Remember to focus on **likely** outcomes not **possible** outcomes.

Step 3 – Identify control measures and evaluate the residual risk

- Identify control measures that either reduce the severity of the risk and / or the likelihood of a risk occurring
- Follow the hierarchy of controls. Remember, whilst we don't have to eliminate all risk, we must reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Evaluate the residual risks once control measures have been applied. If the residual risk is:
    - High then you must not allow the activity to commence until further control measures have been identified and implemented.
    - Medium then you should consider whether further controls could be introduced to reduce risk even further. Additional controls and any timeframes should be recorded on your action plan. If it is not reasonably practicable to implement further controls, then you should monitor the activity to make sure risks are being adequately managed.
    - Low then you can carry out the activity. You should continue to monitor the activity to satisfy yourself that controls are effective.

Step 4 – Record your significant findings and implement control measures

As the University has more than 5 employees, we are legally required to have a written record of the significant findings of our risk assessments. We recommend these are recorded on the University's risk assessment template (see Appendix 2).

- Agreed control measures **MUST** be implemented. If you cannot implement a control measure, then the work must not go ahead. The risk assessment should be reviewed and alternative control measures identified and implemented.
- The significant findings of your risk assessment must be communicated to the people who have been identified as being at risk of harm. This can be achieved in several ways:
    - People carrying out the work should read the risk assessment, and you should take steps to confirm that they have understood what is required. They could confirm this by signing the risk assessment record sheet. Remember that people carrying out the work may need some training - this could be general induction training or task-specific training depending on the nature of the work.
    - Visitors, students and others working nearby will need to be informed of the risk assessment findings and any requirements they might need to follow. This could be through instruction or induction training or by explaining local rules such as the requirement to wear specific Personal Protective Equipment when in the work area.
    - Provision of suitable signs and barriers to ensure people who may come into proximity to the hazard are aware of any risks.

Step 5 – Review and revise the assessment as necessary

Risk assessments are live documents. They should be reviewed regularly to make sure they are up to date. Reviews should take place:

- Annually for high-risk activities. Every three years for all other activities.
- Following any significant changes (for example, if new plant or equipment is brought into use, or there is a significant change in personnel or in the location where work will be caried out).
- Following any accident or near-miss.
- If there is any reason to suspect that the assessment (and the identified controls) is no longer effectively controlling the risk.

9. Appendix 1 RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Risk Matrix and Rating Guidance:

The assessor shall assign values for the hazard severity **(a)** and likelihood of occurrence **(b)** (taking into account the frequency and duration of exposure) on a scale of 1 to 5, then multiply them together to give the rating band:

Hazard Severity (a)	*Likelihood of Occurrence (b)*
1 – Trivial (e.g. discomfort, slight bruising, self-help recovery, no significant harm to health or mental health) **2 – Minor** (e.g. small cut, abrasion, basic first aid need, temporary ill-heath leading to discomfort, stress / distress) **3 – Moderate** (e.g. strain, sprain, incapacitation or other injury or diagnosable mental health condition > 7 days absence from work or amended duties,) **4 – Serious** (e.g. fracture or hospitalisation (for >24 hrs) or incapacitation (<7 days) or Diagnosable mental health condition significantly affecting day to day life; Self harm or harm to others due to mental health condition. **5 – Catastrophic** (single or multiple fatalities or life changing disabilities or injuries, suicide risk or potential harm to others as a result of severe mental health impacts).	**1 – Remote** (almost never) **2 – Unlikely** (occurs rarely) **3 – Possible** (could occur, but uncommon) **4 – Likely** (recurrent but not frequent) **5 – Very likely** (occurs frequently)

Risk Assessment Matrix

(B)↓ (A)→	Trivial	Minor	Moderate	Serious	Catastrophic
Remote	1	2	3	4	5
Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
Possible	3	6	9	12	15
Likely	4	8	12	16	20
Very likely	5	10	15	20	25

Risk Rating Bands (A x B)

LOW RISK (1 – 8)	MEDIUM RISK (9 - 12)	HIGH RISK (15 - 25)
Continue, but review periodically to ensure controls remain effective	Continue, but implement additional reasonably practicable controls where possible and monitor regularly	**STOP THE ACTIVITY** Identify new controls. Activity must not proceed until risks are reduced to a low or medium level

Risk Assessment Record

Risk Assessment Title:	Date Produced:	Review Date:
Overview/Description of Activity:	Duration/Frequency of Activity**:**	
Location of Activity:	Generic or Specific Assessment:	

#	Hazard(s) identified	Who might be affected and how	Existing controls & measures	Severity (a)	Likelihood (b)	Risk Rating (a x b)	Additional control/action required
1			•				•
2			•				•
3			•				•
4			•				•
5			•				•
6			•				•
7			•				•

#	Hazard(s) identified	Who might be affected and how	Existing controls & measures	Severity (a)	Likelihood (b)	Risk Rating (a x b)	Additional control/action required
8			•				•
9			•				•
10			•				•

Assessor signature:	Print name:	**Date:**

Risk Assessment Action Plan

Hazard No.	Action to be taken	By whom	Target date	Review date	Outcome at review date
Responsible manager's signature: **Print name:** **Date:**					**Responsible manager's signature:** **Print name:** **Date**

Risk Assessment Sign-On Sheet

Sign on Sheet to acknowledge understanding of Risk Assessment:

Names and Signatures of other workers/researchers/PG/UG students *All others undertaking the process described must signify that they understand the hazards and risks*.		
Print name:	Signature:	Date: