

University Health & Safety Arrangements: Chapter 9



Health & Safety Risk Management & Risk Assessments – key principles

Key word(s):	(Health & safety) risk management; risk assessment; sensible risk management Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999; Continuous improvement; PDCA cycle
Target audience:	All managers with duties to manage work and assess risks All staff

Introduction

1. The University promotes the use of sensible health & safety risk management for all its activities, through informed assessment and proportionate risk controls.
2. The principles of sensible risk management are:
 - a) Ensuring that employees, students and the public are properly protected
 - b) Ensuring compliance with legal requirements
 - c) Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which give rise to less severe injury but occur more frequently, and those that are less likely to occur but if they do happen, could result in very serious consequences.
 - d) Enabling and supporting innovation and learning not stifling them
 - e) Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly
 - f) Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

3. Risk management is NOT about creating a totally risk free society, or generating paperwork for the sake of it. It should not be used to exaggerate trivial risks, or stop learning activities where the risks are managed.

Hierarchy of controls

4. These are specified in EU Council Directive 89/391/EEC and reproduced in the UK's Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 as amended, in Regulation 4 and Schedule 1. ¹
5. The mnemonic ESCAPE summarises the legal hierarchy:
 - E**liminate exposure
 - S**ubstitute with a less hazardous alternative
 - C**ontain by engineering measures
 - A**dopt safe systems of work
 - use **P**recautionary signs
 - wear personal protective **E**quipment.

Importance of design and procurement

6. In considering measures that could eliminate or avoid risk altogether, attention should be paid to careful design and procurement. Although the design concept is borrowed from legislation relating to safety in construction, it has much wider application.
7. In this context, "design" includes:
 - a) The design of items and systems to produce a larger item (eg building a lab, assembling a research rig, planning a fieldtrip)
 - b) The design and selection of processes (eg considering different means of achieving the same research objective or product; selecting alternatives to carcinogenic materials).
 - c) The mode of operation and the definition of operating parameters, e.g. safe limits of operation of equipment, or office lay-outs that provide sufficient space for people to move around in.
 - d) Consideration of human factors, including the man-equipment interface (eg the selection of personal protective equipment fit for purpose *and* comfortable to wear).

¹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/pdfs/uksi_19993242_en.pdf

What should sensible risk management aim to achieve?

8. Most health and safety legal requirements are to control the risk “so far as is reasonably practicable” (SFAIRP). There are a few more absolute regulations, typically relating to guarding parts of dangerous machines, but most are qualified by the term SRAIRP. This gives an employer some flexibility in selecting and using control measures that are most suited to the circumstances – providing the controls achieve the same degree of protection from risk. An alternative phrase is “as low as reasonably practicable” (ALARP) which effectively means the same thing.
9. Risk assessment is the process through which the decision about how to control risk is made, and a conclusion reached about the balance between weighing the risk of injury against the cost or sacrifice needed to control or reduce that risk. Because the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 sets up a reverse burden of proof, risk assessments must show that to do more to control a risk would be “grossly disproportionate” to the benefits. That judgement **does not** take into account whether a control measure is affordable – otherwise, poorer employers would be able to avoid the duty to protect their staff altogether.
10. To take an obvious example, it would be disproportionate to spend £1 million on preventing a few people getting splinters from old desk tops. But it would be reasonably practicable to spend £1 million pounds to control the risk of a major explosion or fire that could kill or injure lots of people.

Duties of Line Managers

11. At the University, the duty to ensure risk assessments are carried out is delegated through line management, and line managers should satisfy themselves that the arrangements they put in place are effective. The person most familiar with the activity or equipment giving rise to a risk will usually be the person directly involved on a daily basis, and that person should be consulted and informed about the contents of the risk assessment and should understand the steps they need to take to control the risk.
12. Managers and others carrying out risk assessments should involve Trade Union and staff safety representatives and should consult with them about changes to work activities that necessitate review or update of the risk assessments.

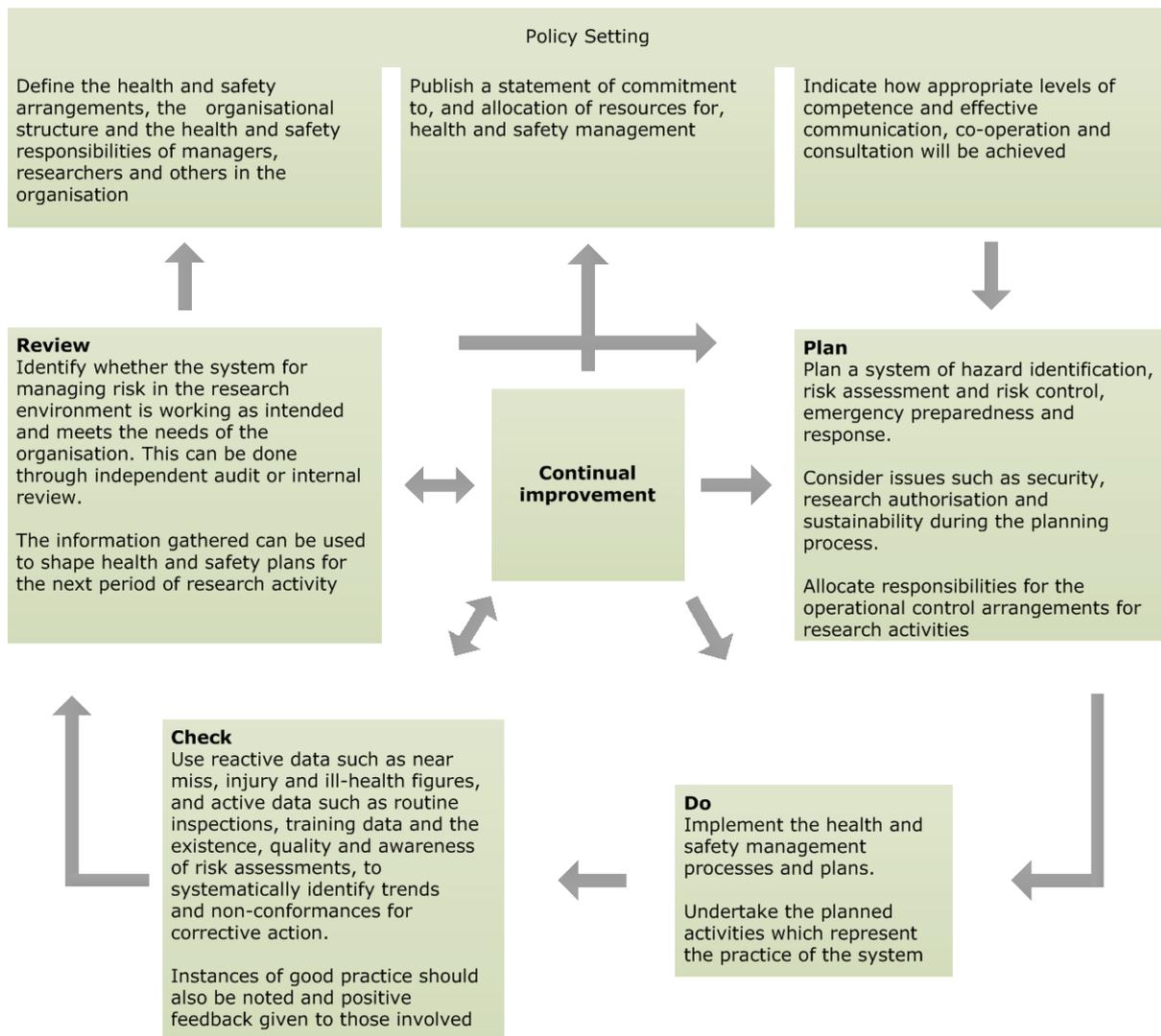
Types of risk assessment and risk assessment forms

13. Just as there are many different types of risk, so there are many different forms or ways of recording risk assessment and the University does not require a particular format to be used. However, for the majority of purposes, [the](#)

[University's risk assessment form](#) can be used. If alternative templates are used, they must address the same questions.

Using risk assessments to promote continuous improvement

14. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to have appropriate arrangements in place for 'the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review' of their risk identification and control systems. These should be incorporated into an overall organisational health and safety management system, such as the one illustrated below².



15. These cycles can be seen at strategic level (eg the University has a campus-wide policy statement, organisations, and arrangements that extend across the whole gamut of its activities), at School and Directorate level, and also at smaller scales

² Illustration taken from publication [Responsible research Managing health & safety in research: Guidance for the not-for-profit research sector](#) 2012.

within managed units, eg within a research team. Other arrangements chapters describe some of these systems in more detail.

Special cases under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 as amended

16. New and expectant mothers (regulation 16) – where the work activity involves a risk to a new or expectant mother or her baby, the risk assessment for the workplace or activity must include this risk. Such risks could include working conditions or processes (such as standing for long periods) and physical, chemical, biological or radiological agents. On receipt of a notification that someone is pregnant, has given birth or is breast-feeding, the existing risk assessment should be reviewed. If it does not already cover risks to this group of people, it must be amended. Advice should be sought from Occupational Health.
17. Protection of young persons (regulation 19) – risk assessments for young persons (under the age of 18) must take into account their relative lack of experience, and any lack of awareness of potential risks. If a young person is recruited or is on a work experience placement, existing risk assessments should be reviewed and amended as necessary.
18. Lone working – the University has approved particular arrangements to do with risk assessments for lone working (see [Chapter 10](#)).

University Guidance

19. The Safety Office has issued the following guidance on risk assessments:

- [General guidance](#) in the form of FAQs
- [The role of generic and dynamic risk assessments](#)

Document control box	
Title	Chapter 9 : Risk Management & Risk Assessments – key principles
Date approved:	OHSTAG, 17 August 2012; SHE Committee, 5 Sept 2012.
Approving body:	Safety, Health & Environment Committee
Implementation date:	Sept 2012
Version:	1.2 May 2016 Updated illustration to reflect published source 1.1, Mar 2016, personnel change 1.0
Next review date:	May 2019 (Upon significant change/3 years)
Owner of this chapter	Occupational Health, Safety & Training Advisory Group (OHSTAG) Chair : Professor Nalin Thakker Secretary: Dr Patrick Seechurn, Head of Safety Services