

Noise at Work Procedure

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Procedure is to outline the process to ensure noisy areas/activities are assessed and suitable controls are put in place to protect staff and students and comply with legislation.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Faculties and Departments where noisy work is carried out.

3. DEFINITIONS

Noisy	As a simple guide line, activities will be deemed to be noisy if any of the following apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2 m apart for at least part of the day? • Employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day?
Action Levels	The Regulations require you to take specific action at certain action values. These relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the levels of exposure to noise of your employees averaged over a working day or week; and • the maximum noise (peak sound pressure) to which employees are exposed in a working day.
Lower exposure action values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily or weekly exposure of 80 dB; • peak sound pressure of 135 dB;
Upper exposure action values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily or weekly exposure of 85 dB; • peak sound pressure of 137 dB.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. The Vice Chancellor

On behalf of the Council the Vice-Chancellor has executive responsibility to ensure, that the requirements of the health and safety legislation and the University health and safety policy are complied with. The Vice-Chancellor will ensure that responsibility for health and safety is properly assigned and accepted at all levels within the University.

4.2. **Deans, Directors, Heads of Schools and Departments and Research Institute Directors, Managers who** are responsible for ensuring that all noisy activities are assessed and controlled as laid out in this procedure.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1. Decide if an assessment is required

Not all work activities require a noise assessment; the decision to carry one out will depend on how loud the noise is and how long people are exposed to it. In the definition above, an activity will be deemed to be noisy, i.e. requiring an assessment, if:

- Employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2 m apart for at least part of the day, or if
- Employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day?

It should be noted that the Regulations do not apply to:

- employees or members of the public making an informed choice to go to noisy places;
- low-level noise which is a nuisance but causes no risk of hearing damage.

Before requesting a noise assessment the manager should endeavour to eliminate the hazard by

- doing the job in another way that negates the need to use the noisy equipment. If this is not possible
- consider substituting the noisy machine with a quieter one
- using engineering controls e.g. better machine maintenance/lubrication, putting machine on rubber mounts, enclose the machine with sound proofing materials or segregating workers from the noisy machine.

5.2. Carrying out an assessment

If a manager deems a work activity to be noisy, he/she should complete the Occupational Hygiene Monitoring Request Form available from http://www.ulster.ac.uk/hr/healthandsafety/Forms/monitoring_request_form.pdf and contact Health and Safety Services.

On receipt of the form, a Noise Assessment will be carried out, Health and Safety Services will require other information e.g.

- A list of the employee's daily / weekly duties with approximate time spent on each
- Details of hearing protection worn

Health and Safety Services will take noise measurements and produce a report in which will be specified

- The L_{epd} (the daily personal exposure level over eight hours) for the worker carrying out that activity, measured in dB(A)
- Classification of the level of the noise, i.e. below the lower exposure action values, in lower exposure action values or in Upper exposure action values
- Specification of necessary control measures, i.e. training, PPE, health surveillance, and
- Recommendations on further actions that may be taken.

5.3. Actions required on receipt of report

On receipt of the report the manager will be told if the noise from the activity

- is under the Lower Exposure action values
- in the Lower Exposure action values, or
- in the Upper Exposure action values

This will each have separate requirements

Under the Lower Exposure action values – the manager need not take any immediate action, but periodic noise assessment may be required to ensure the noise levels don't increase.

In the Lower Exposure action values,

- Appropriate hearing protection must be provided for workers who ask for it,
- Workers should attend annual health surveillance where they will undergo audiometric testing
- Workers should be trained, this training should cover risks from exposure to noise, controls, correct use and wearing of PPE, health surveillance and responsibilities

In the Upper Exposure action values,

- The wearing of appropriate hearing protection is compulsory for employees carrying out that activity
- If the noise level in an area is assessed as being in the upper exposure action values, the area must be marked as a 'Hearing Protection Zone' and it will be compulsory for all in that area to wear appropriate hearing protection
- Workers should attend annual health surveillance where they will undergo audiometric testing
- Workers should be trained, this training should cover risks from exposure to noise, controls, correct use and wearing of PPE, health surveillance and responsibilities

These actions are the minimum that should be carried out, the regulations require noise levels and exposure to be reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable.

6. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order (1978)
Control of Noise at Work Regulations (N. Ireland 2006)