

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT PROCEDURE

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| Policy Name – Personal Protective Equipment Procedure | |
| Version number: 1 | |
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| Policy Owner | Policy Author/Reviewer |
| Jimmy Fenton Health, Safety and Wellbeing | Declan Woods |
| Approving body | Date of approval |
| Vice Chancellor/SLT | April 2025 |
| | Equality Screened |
| | In progress |
| | Next Review date |
| | April 2027 |
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Health & Safety Personal Protective Equipment Procedure

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| Originally Issued | June 2014 (UUHSW27) | Contact | HSW |
| Latest Issue | April 2025 | Status | Current |
| Approved by | Vice Chancellor/SLT | Next review date | April 2027 |
| The current version is available on the Health & Safety website at: Health and Safety Policy and Procedures - Health and Safety (ulster.ac.uk) | | | |

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Procedure sets out Ulster University arrangements for the effective use and management of Personal Protective Equipment ("PPE").

2. Scope and Commencement

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all staff and managers selecting and using PPE while at work and shall come into effect from April 2025.
- 2.2 Consideration should also be given to relevant specific Health & Safety Procedures (e.g. Noise, Work at Height, Confined Spaces, Substances Hazardous to Health etc.) where assessment may include requirement for PPE.
- 2.3 Section 4 below sets out items which fall outside the scope of this procedure.

3. Background

- 3.1 Maintaining a safe place of work is normally preferred to protecting individual people; as an example, it is better to stop a heavy weight from falling than providing everyone with hard hats and reinforced footwear. Therefore, whilst very effective in protecting the user, the use of PPE should be considered as a "last resort", where a significant risk remains after all other reasonable measures to control it have been put in place.
- 3.2 Completion of a risk assessment will determine if, and what, PPE is required. Some hazards may still remain after engineering controls and safe systems of work have been applied. PPE may then be needed to reduce the risk of injury from:
- breathing in dust, mist, gas or fume;
 - falling materials hitting people;
 - flying particles or splashes of corrosive liquids getting into people's eyes;
 - skin contact with corrosive materials;
 - excessive noise;
 - extremes of heat or cold.

- 3.3 PPE must be free of charge if a risk assessment shows it is needed.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 **"Personal Protective Equipment"** (PPE) is defined as; all equipment (including clothing affording protection against the weather) which is intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects them against one or more risks to their health or safety, and includes any addition or accessory designed to meet that objective e.g. safety helmets, gloves, eye/face protection, ear defenders, respiratory protection, high-

visibility clothing, safety footwear, safety harnesses, life preservers / buoyancy aids / life jackets etc.

4.2 In this procedure, PPE does not include:

- items of uniform or ordinary working clothes, even if provided by the University, which do not specifically protect the health or safety of the wearer;
- portable devices for detecting and signalling risk and nuisance, such as gas detectors, radiation dosimeters etc.

5. Key Legal Requirements

5.1 The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations (NI) 1993 require that PPE is:

- to be supplied and used at work wherever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways;
- properly assessed before use to ensure it is suitable;
- maintained and stored properly;
- provided with instructions on how to use it safely; and
- used correctly by employees.

5.2 Other legislation (e.g. The Control of Noise at Work, The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health etc.) place additional requirements for specific PPE. Related Health & Safety legislation and University procedures should be considered alongside this procedure.

5.3 “Approved Codes of Practice” (“ACOP”) give practical advice on how to comply with legislative requirements in simple terms. If you follow the advice, you will be doing enough to comply with the law in respect of those specific matters on which the Code gives advice. The relevant ACOP is: L25 - [Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations Approved Code of Practice](#).

6 Responsibilities

6.1 General roles and responsibilities for university staff are detailed in the [University Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy](#). Those with responsibility for workshops, laboratories and studios or for activities involving use of, or potential exposure to, substances hazardous to health will have particular responsibilities.

6.2 **Line managers** (including academic supervisors, managers of temporary/agency contract staff, technicians) should:

- ensure that, through Risk Assessment, all other health and/or safety control measures have been considered before the use of PPE is agreed;
- ensure that suitable PPE is provided before staff and/or students are subjected to the identified risk(s);

- take all reasonable steps to ensure that any PPE provided to staff is properly used, including the provision of adequate training and information and supervision;
- ensure that adequate storage is provided for the PPE issued to their staff;
- ensure that PPE is maintained and replaced as required;
- keep records of training on PPE;
- record the issue of PPE to individuals. This may not need to apply to generic disposable PPE.

6.3 Staff/Students must:

- use any PPE provided to them when required, and in accordance with any information, instruction and training received;
- only use PPE provided by the University for work-related activities;
- check the condition of their PPE prior to every use;
- take reasonable care of PPE provided, ensure that it is cleaned/launched and maintained as per information/training received and that it is returned to the accommodation provided for it after use;
- report any losses, defects or other problems with PPE to their line manager/technician/academic supervisor;
- highlight any concerns about the use of PPE and/or unsafe working conditions/practices to line managers/technicians/academic supervisors for consideration.

7 Provision of PPE as a health and/or safety control

- 7.1 Suitable PPE must be provided to staff and students where health and safety risks cannot be adequately controlled by other means. PPE should be considered as a “last resort” in the control of risks, and only resorted to when risk remains after all other health and safety control measures have been put in place.
- 7.2 There are a number of reasons for this approach:
- Firstly, PPE protects only the person wearing it, whereas measures controlling the risk at source can protect everyone at the workplace.
 - Secondly, in practice the actual level of protection can be difficult to assess. Effective protection is only achieved by suitable PPE, correctly fitted and maintained and properly used.
 - Thirdly, PPE may restrict the wearer to some extent by limiting mobility or visibility, or by requiring additional weight to be carried.
- 7.3 PPE provided by Faculty, School or Department should:
- be appropriate for the risks involved, the conditions at the place it is required to be used and the period for which it is to be worn;
 - take into account the ergonomic requirements of the user, their state of health and the characteristics of their working environment;
 - fit the user correctly;
 - so far as is practicable, prevent or adequately control the risks involved without increasing the overall risk;

- be 'CE' marked or 'UKCA' marked and comply with the requirements of the current PPE Regulations.
- 7.4 Purchase of PPE must be met by the relevant Faculty, School or Department along with any associated costs such as maintenance, storage, inspection.
- 7.5 Temporary/Agency contract staff should not be permitted to carry out work activities without the appropriate PPE, as identified in the respective Risk Assessment. The responsible person for the contract works should ensure that issues surrounding the provision, supply and maintenance of PPE are included in that contract.

8 Assessment and Selection of PPE

- 8.1 The selection of PPE must be carefully considered to ensure that it is suitable and that users are properly protected. Work cannot be permitted to start without appropriate PPE in place.
- 8.2 Before choosing any PPE, an assessment must be made to determine whether the PPE will be suitable. Managers/Academic Supervisors/Technicians should involve staff/students where possible when assessing and selecting PPE as this can improve understanding of compliance with safe use.
- 8.3 The assessment should include:
- a) an assessment of any risk, or risks, to health or safety which have not been avoided by other means;
 - b) the characteristics which PPE must have in order to be effective against the risks (taking into account any risks which the equipment itself may create); Select equipment which suits the users, consider the size, fit, weight of PPE. For some PPE, such as harnesses or lifejackets, choosing the right size is particularly critical to ensure they fit properly and they need to do so to protect against fatal hazards;
 - c) comparison of the characteristics of the PPE available with the characteristics referred to in subparagraph (b) (above);
 - d) an assessment as to whether the PPE is compatible with other PPE which is in use and which a user would be required to wear at the same time; and
 - e) Choose equipment which is 'CE' or 'UKCA' marked using a recognised competent supplier only.

- 8.4 Guidance on the selection of PPE is provided at **Appendix A** and at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/using-the-right-type-of-ppe.htm>. The HSW team can also provide specialist advice.
- 8.5 The assessment should be reviewed if there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change.

9 Maintenance of PPE

- 9.1 Maintenance of PPE should include, as appropriate:
- Examination – checking for faults, damage, wear and tear, dirt etc;
 - Testing – to ensure PPE is operating as intended;
 - Cleaning/decontaminating/laundering;
 - Repair or replacement.
- 9.2 Simple replacements can be carried out by a trained wearer, for example, replacing hygiene kit on hearing defenders. More intricate repairs should be done by those with the required skills and technical knowledge. Only the correct spare parts as recommended by the manufacturer should be used.
- 9.3 Non-hazardous cleaning may be carried out by the PPE user. However, where there is a significant risk associated with cleaning, care must be taken to ensure it is carried out effectively and without risk.
- 9.4 PPE will have a useable 'shelf life'. When it exceeds its shelf life or is so badly damaged that repair is not possible, or is too costly, then it needs to be replaced.
- 9.5 Where PPE is found to be faulty/defective it must not be used and the activity requiring the PPE should not take place until replacement available.

10 Storage / Disposal of PPE

- 10.1 Suitable storage is needed when PPE is not in use as it prevents against:
- a) damage from chemicals, sunlight, high humidity, heat and accidental knocks/damage;
 - b) contamination from dirt and harmful substances;
 - c) the possibility of losing the PPE.
- 10.2 Where PPE becomes contaminated during use, it should be cleaned, where appropriate laundered and decontaminated before storage, otherwise the accommodation may itself become contaminated and will also require suitable cleaning and decontamination.
- 10.3 Where PPE clothing becomes wet, the accommodation should (where reasonably practicable) enable it to be dried by the beginning of the following work period unless other dry clothing is provided.

- 10.4 PPE which is intended to be disposable should not be stored or reused beyond its recommended usage.
- 10.5 PPE which may be contaminated by a substance hazardous to health, must be removed on leaving the working area and kept apart from uncontaminated clothing and equipment. Such equipment should be subsequently decontaminated and cleaned or, if necessary, disposed of.
- 10.6 Disposal of hazardous substances or PPE contaminated by a hazardous substance(s) must comply with the Hazardous Waste Regulations (NI) 2005. Where required a licensed waste carrier must be used for safe disposal – for more information on complying with waste regulations go to: [Moving and transferring hazardous waste | nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk).

11 Information, Instruction and Training

- 11.1 Where PPE is to be used as a control measure it is important that the user is provided with relevant information, instruction and training as is adequate and appropriate to enable them to know:
 - a) the risk or risks which the PPE will avoid or limit;
 - b) the purpose for which, and the manner in which, PPE is to be used;
 - c) the limitations of the PPE (i.e. protection it will, and will not, provide); and
 - d) any action to be taken by the user to ensure that the PPE remains in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair as required.

Training records for PPE users should be maintained (ideally on LMS) to reflect the points above and retained for a minimum of three years.

- 11.2 Useful information on specific pieces of PPE can be found at **Appendix A** of this procedure.

Guidance on the Selection of PPE

The following must be considered when assessing whether PPE is suitable:

1. Is it appropriate for the risks involved? For example, eye protection designed for providing protection against splashes from hazardous liquids may not offer adequate face protection for someone using an angle grinder to cut steel or stone.
2. Is it appropriate for the environment it will be used in? For example, weather conditions, heating, noise, atmospheric conditions etc.
3. Does it prevent or adequately control the risks involved without increasing the overall level of risk?
4. Can it be adjusted to fit the wearer correctly?
(NOTE: Respiratory Protective Equipment ("RPE") should be tested ("face fit" test) to ensure it fits correctly. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/fit-testing-basics.htm>)
5. Has the state of health of those who will be wearing it been taken into account where appropriate?
6. What are the needs of the job and the demands it places on the wearer? For example, the length of time the PPE needs to be worn, the physical effort required to do the job and the requirements for visibility and communication. Consider the health of the person wearing the PPE and its ergonomic effects. PPE made of certain materials should not be issued to workers if they are known to cause allergies, for example latex gloves. Heavy or bulky suits can cause or make worse existing musculoskeletal problems and cause thermal comfort problems. The aim should be to choose PPE which will give maximum protection while ensuring minimum discomfort to the wearer, as uncomfortable equipment is unlikely to be worn properly.
7. If more than one item of PPE is being worn, are they compatible? For example:
 - does a particular type of respirator make it difficult to get eye protection to fit properly?
 - is a hard hat compromising the use of earmuffs/goggles?

Consultation

Those who do the job are usually best placed to know what is involved and can provide valuable input to the selection process. There is a better chance of PPE being used effectively if it is accepted by the user.

Approved Equipment

All PPE supplied must be [‘UKCA’ or ‘CE’ marked](#) and comply with the requirements of the current PPE Regulations. The ‘UKCA’ or ‘CE’ marking signifies that the PPE satisfies certain basic safety requirements and, in some cases, will have been tested and certified by an independent body.

Useful Information

Useful information on the provision of PPE can be accessed through:

- **Suppliers / manufactures** who are required to provide suitable information on their product.
- **Health & Safety Executive (NI):**

<https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

[Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations Approved Code of Practice](#)

- **Health & Safety Executive (GB):**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/index.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/using-the-right-type-of-ppe.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/index.htm>