RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

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HEALTH AND SAFETY
RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

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Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policies and Procedures - Ulster University

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to demonstrate legal compliance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 (MHSAWR) and prevent injury and/or ill health. The MHSAWR requires a risk assessment to be undertaken to identify the hazards, assess the risk and implement suitable controls to reduce the risk of injury and/or ill health arising from work related activities.

This procedure in conjunction with the risk assessment template outlines the key steps that should be taken when performing a risk assessment in the University.

2. Scope and Commencement

This procedure applies to all areas of operation within the University, with effect from May 2025. It applies to all work-related activities that are carried out within the University campuses that could cause injury and/or ill health to staff, students, visitors, members of the public, and contractors.

3. Background

Before risks can be managed, all hazards in the workplace and in processes must be identified. This can be achieved through observations, inspections, task analysis and incident trending.

The risk assessment should be suitable and sufficient. (See below definition in Section 4)

Accidents and incidents can have detrimental effects to the injured person and to an organisation. Risk assessing the process and implementing controls can reduce these accidents or incidents.

4. Definitions

Hazard	A **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, for example, electricity, working from a ladder, an open drawer, etc., as defined in the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland's (HSENI) 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment'.
Risk	A **risk** is the likelihood (either low or high) that a person could be harmed by the hazard, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be. (See HSENI 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment')
Risk assessment	A **risk assessment** is a careful examination of what in your work could cause harm to people, so you can weigh up if you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. (See HSENI 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment')
General or generic risk assessment	A **general or generic risk assessment** can cover a wide range of hazards associated with an activity or process.
Specific risk assessments	**Specific risk assessments** apply to identifying hazards of a specific activity, location, and person.
Dynamic risk assessments	**Dynamic risk assessments** are risk assessments for use in evolving environments (or rapidly evolving environments).
Reasonable foreseeable	**Reasonable foreseeable** is the consequence (or hazard) from such actions, that a person could have anticipated (or foreseen) that may result in, or has the known potential to cause, personal injury or ill health.
Hierarchy of controls	**Hierarchy of controls** is a top down approach for eliminating or reducing the risk of injury. This risk based approach starts with the most effective controls at the top down to the least effective. A combination of controls can be used to suitability and sufficiently control the hazard.

Reasonably Practicable	**Reasonably Practicable** is putting the controls you have identified into place. It may not be feasible to eliminate all risks, but you must do everything to reduce the risks as low as is 'reasonably practicable' ("ALARP") to protect people from harm. Reasonably practicable means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of time, cost, and effort. (See Health and Safety Executive Risk Management Guidance - Risk Assessment: Steps needed to manage risk')
Suitable and sufficient	The risk assessment should be **suitable and sufficient.** As such, it should: i. Identify the significant risks ii. The levels of controls should be proportionate to the risk iii. All relevant persons affected have been considered iv. Indicate a valid time scale for corrective action v. Most hazardous activities or areas should have the most sophisticated risk assessments.
Relevant person or relevant persons	**Relevant person or relevant persons** may include Departmental Managers, Academic Supervisors, or Heads of School.

5. Key Legal Requirement

The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 (HSAWO) requires employers to fulfil their legal obligation to protect, so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety, and welfare of their employees and those not in their employment.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work (NI) Regulations 2000 (MHSAWR) requires employers to undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and implement proportionate controls.

6. Responsibilities

Please refer to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy for further details on roles and levels of responsibility.

6.1 Relevant Persons

As outlined in Section 4, relevant persons must ensure that:

- All activities are risk assessed and controlled as laid out in this procedure;
- All necessary staff have been provided the risk assessment training;
- Eliminate and reduce risks to as low as reasonably practicable;
- Track until completion any recommended risk control measures;
- Ensure all risk assessments are documented, easily retrievable and reviewed as and when required;
- Communicate the risk assessment findings to their relevant staff teams, students and others as identified in the risk assessment, for example visitors or contractors;
- Relevant employees and trade union health and safety representatives are consulted;
- Seek advice from your Health and Safety Co-Ordinator or the HSW team if further advice is required, for example, unfamiliar risks or risk remains high after controls implemented.

6.2 Employees and Students

Must ensure that, where applicable, they:

- Understand the outcomes of the risk assessments, to include the associated risks and appropriate control measures to reduce the risk of injury and/or ill health;
- Adhere to the safety procedure developed within the work area;

- Report any unsafe conditions directly to the relevant person (Manager, Technician or Supervisor).

6.3 Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Team

The HSW team will:

- Ensure risk assessment training material is relevant, up to date and easily retrievable;
- Deliver risk assessment training to University staff;
- Provide support and assistance to the relevant teams.

7. List of Activities

To ensure that all activities have been suitably and sufficiently risk assessed, Faculties and Departments should develop an inventory list of activities and correlate these with the associated risk assessment.

8. Risk Assessment Process

The five steps to completing the risk assessment process is outlined in the front page of the risk assessment template (Health and Safety Forms - Ulster University). The risk assessment introduction section must be read prior to completing the assessment.

The risk assessor must be trained and consult the relevant people during the completion of the risk assessment.

The risk assessment must be completed prior to the process or activity taking place.

Control measures implemented should be chosen based on the hierarchy of control (see Risk Assessment template for further information) and there should be consideration on:

- The severity of the hazard or risk;
- The availability and suitability of controls;
- Industry best practice;
- Introduction of ‘new’ hazards;
- Cost Benefit Analysis (Does the risk reduction equate with the control cost).

9. Specific Risk Assessments

The general risk assessment may indicate the requirement to complete a more specific risk assessment to identify more specific measures to adequately control risks. These include, and are not limited to:

- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Risk Assessment;
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Risk Assessment;
- Workplace Stress Risk Assessment;
- New or Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment;
- Employment of Young Persons (under the age of 18) Risk Assessment.

Separate procedures exist for COSHH, Manual Handling, DSE and Stress Management and should be referred to when completing such risk assessments.

Dynamic risk assessments are suitable for use in evolving environments (or rapidly evolving environments) where employees are required to make quick mental judgments to manage risk and remain safe. These assessments are not required to be documented.

10. Migration of Risk Assessments

Risk assessments completed in the previous format are still acceptable, and migration into the newly updated format should take place during the next review of the risk assessment process.

11. Resources

Overview: Managing risks and risk assessment at work (HSE)

Risk assessment: Template and examples (HSE)

Five steps to risk assessment (HSENI)

Risk assessment (HSENI)

Risk management: Expert guidance - ALARP at a glance (HSE)