1. **Introduction**

This document provides guidance on carrying out risk assessments at the University. The University undertakes a diverse range of activities which involve varying levels of risk. The guidance is designed to enable and support these activities, whilst helping schools and services carry them out in a safe manner. This document is based on the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) guidance Risk assessment: A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf).

2. **Risk assessment: the main principles**

2.1 **What is a risk assessment?**

A risk assessment is a logical way of looking at work activities and identifying sensible precautions (control measures) to control the risks created by these activities.
There is no set way to carry out or record a risk assessment, although a suggested approach is outlined in 2.2 below. The University has a standard risk assessment template (see appendix 1) and subject specific templates for example for DSE or work related stress. Locally developed risk assessment processes and templates may also be available. More information can be found from your local School/Service Safety Adviser (SSA) and the Local Rules document where you work.

2.2 Hazard versus risk

A hazard is something that has the potential to cause harm. Examples include a trailing cable, chemicals, electricity etc.

A risk is the likelihood (high or low) that someone could be harmed by a hazard. For example the risk of tripping over a trailing cable on the floor of a busy office might be high.

2.3 Is a risk assessment needed?

If the work activities present a foreseeable risk of injury or ill health, a risk assessment should be carried out. In a relatively low risk environment (such as an office) a single risk assessment covering all the activities undertaken together with DSE risk assessments may be all that is required. In other workplaces, with higher risk activities a more extensive risk assessment and separate subject specific risk assessments may be appropriate. The Local Rules document for the school or service and the SSA will have further information on the arrangements for carrying out risk assessments locally.

An effective risk assessment:

- Enables the work to be carried out safely whilst supporting learning and innovation
- Focusses on significant risks (you are only expected to cover reasonably foreseeable risks, not trivial ones)
- Covers all groups of people who might be harmed (e.g. staff, public, students, visitors, contractors, etc.)
- Identifies sensible and appropriate control measures which reduce the risk to an appropriate low level.
- Has been produced in consultation with those carrying out the work and their representatives
- Records any actions required, with the highest risks being prioritised
- Is not about generating large amounts of paper work
- Does not aim to completely remove all risks - this is neither realistic nor desirable.

2.4 Managing risk dynamically

In some circumstances there may be a need to dynamically assess risks as an activity is carried out. This can be particularly useful where the activities carried out are inherently variable or unpredictable. This approach should not replace the risk assessment carried out before an activity takes place but is in addition to the risk
assessment. If it is likely an activity will need to be dynamically assessed as the work is carried out, this should be covered in the standard risk assessment and details provided in the controls and comments sections.

**Definition**

“Dynamic risk assessment is a continuous process of identifying hazards and evaluating risks as they come up, taking appropriate actions to eliminate or reduce the risk.”¹ ([http://www.iosh.co.uk/ushaguide](http://www.iosh.co.uk/ushaguide)).

Some examples where risks may need to be managed dynamically include:

- Security Services – dealing with unpredictable incidents
- Field work in a changeable location (this could be political, environmental etc.)
- Post mortem activities – where it is not possible to foresee all potential hazards until the work has started.

Individuals using this approach must be competent to do so, for example have adequate training, experience and knowledge of the activity being undertaken. This will ensure any actions taken are appropriate. These might include:

- Stop the activity (for example if you or others feel unsafe, or the risks are too great to yourself and others)
- Request help or assistance, for example from a colleague or manager or obtaining specialist advice
- Use a different method, if safe to do
- Change equipment, if safe to do so

**Actions after using dynamic risk assessment:**

- Consider if the current risk assessment needs reviewing and amend if appropriate
- Depending on the level of risk it may be appropriate to record actions taken whilst the activity was being dynamically assessed – this could be in the form of a report or other record
- Use the action plan section of the risk assessment template to record any further actions required after
- Report accidents or near misses afterwards to enable learning from the incident

2.5 **Risk assessment process overview**

Consult your School or Service’s local rules document and speak to your local SSA. They will be able to give you useful information on how risk assessments are carried out locally, what assessments are already in place, and if there are any specific templates to be used or processes to be followed.

Consider the school or service’s main risk areas and what areas require a risk assessment? For example fieldwork, display screen equipment (DSE) or manual handling. This information should be available from your school/service’s most recent
Self verification assurance assessment. These key areas of risk should be prioritised and assessed before others.

The risk assessment process can be broken down into the following steps:

1. **Identify hazards**
   - Identify significant hazards associated with the activity. What could cause harm? Walk round your workplace, talk to staff, look at accident data and consider non routine activities like maintenance etc.

2. **Who will be harmed?**
   - Consider who might be harmed and how. Include staff, visitors, students, the public and contractor. Also think about individuals such as new or expectant mothers, young people, or disabled people.

3. **Evaluate the risks**
   - Decide how likely it is that harm will occur (further advice is available from the UoB risk assessment template, Appendix 1)

4. **Record findings**
   - Record the significant findings including the hazards, who might be harmed and how and the control measures required (see UoB risk assessment template for details and advice). Findings may also be recorded in the form of an operating procedure or local rules where appropriate.

5. **Review the assessment**
   - The review frequency should be based on the level of risk and any changes to work activities. Consider how effectively controls are implemented, concerns raised, changes to work activities and accidents/near misses.

### 2.6 Control measures

Control measures (referred to in step 4 above) are any measures in place to reduce the risk of harm. The types of controls are listed below (sometimes referred to as the hierarchy of control). They should be considered in this order and preference given to controls higher up the list as they are generally more effective. Most risk assessments will have a combination of these types of controls.

1. **Elimination**: can the hazard be eliminated? For example, avoiding the need for working at height.
2. **Substitution**: for example, substituting a less harmful chemical
3. **Engineering controls**: preventing access to the hazards (e.g. physical barriers to machinery or local exhaust ventilation)
4) **Administrative controls**: organising your work to reduce exposure to the hazard (e.g. safe working procedures, signage, or controlling time spent exposed to a hazard)

5) **Personal protective equipment**: issuing protective equipment should be a last resort after the points above have all been considered.

Generally, the hazards presenting the highest risks should be focused on first and have the most robust control measures in place.

More information on the hierarchy of control can be found from the HSE’s website: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/lwit/assets/downloads/hierarchy-risk-controls.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/lwit/assets/downloads/hierarchy-risk-controls.pdf). Certain subject specific legislation also requires specific control measure to be in place for some risks (for example display screen equipment (DSE) or noise at work).

### 2.7 Responsibilities

As outlined in the University’s health and safety policy ([http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/policies/#council](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/policies/#council)), heads of schools or services are responsible for ensuring systems are in place to ensure the risk assessment process is effectively managed. This includes ensuring those responsible for carrying out risk assessment are competent to do so (see 2.10). The school or service’s local rules document should contain details of how risk assessments are managed locally.

The person responsible for carrying out the risk assessment must:

- ensure the significant findings from the risk assessment are recorded for example the hazards, how people could be harmed, and the control measures required.
- cooperate and coordinate with other parties involved or affected by the work activities being risk assessed. Other parties may need to be involved in the assessment process or be aware of the risk assessments / working procedures.

### 2.8 Other guidance and sharing good practice

The University may have similar activities being carried out in more than one school or service. Sharing information on approaches to risk assessment can be very helpful in these circumstances. SSAs within Schools and services should be able to provide information on their approach to risk assessment or an adviser within Safety and Health Services may be able to facilitate this.

Generic or example risk assessment (sometimes produced by other organisations, trade or professional bodies etc.) may also be useful. It is essential any example assessment is amended to accurately reflect the hazards, risks and work activities being carried by the school or service. Safety and Health Services also has example risk assessments available as part of some subject specific guidance notes: [http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/guidance/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/guidance/).
2.9 What happens next?

Carrying out a risk assessment is just the beginning. The aim of a risk assessment is to prevent harm, to ensure this continues to happen the following should be considered:

- The risk assessment can inform safe systems of work or operating procedures. This prevents risk assessments being filed away and not being working documents.
- Implementation of controls: checks on implementation of controls should be part of the workplace’s health and safety management system.
- Ensuring staff are competent to carry out their work: Providing information on how to work safely is a key part of this. It is not necessary to make staff read the risk assessment for the activities they carry out. In many cases more user-friendly documents are developed which include safety and other key information (see the point below).
- Safe working procedures: These are sometimes called method statements or safe systems of work but may also be part of a document like the Local Rules or more general standard operating procedures.
- Review of risk assessments: the frequency of review should be based on the level of risk and if there have been any changes to the activities being assessed. It is generally recommended that risk assessments are reviewed annually.

2.10 Competence

Those tasked with carrying out risk assessment must be competent to do so. Competence is more than simply attending training. It is a combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge in both carrying out a risk assessment and the subject being assessed.

3. References and other useful information

1) Responsible research. Managing health and safety in research: guidance for the not-for-profit sector [http://www.iosh.co.uk/ushaguide](http://www.iosh.co.uk/ushaguide)
3) HSE sensible risk management: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/principles.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/principles.htm)
4) HSE risk assessment FAQs: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/faq.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/faq.htm)
6) Safety and Health Services' subject specific guidance: [http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/guidance/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/guidance/)
8) HSE guidance on display screen equipment: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/)
9) HSE guidance on noise at work: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/index.htm)
### 4. Document control information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Published document name:</th>
<th>Risk assessment guidance note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date issued:</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version:</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous review dates:</td>
<td>May 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Review Date:</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related documents:</td>
<td>UoB health and safety policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing policy:</td>
<td>UoB health and safety policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance to policy:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation / Related information:</td>
<td>Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HSE risk assessment guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Rules document (containing local arrangements for risk assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document owner:</td>
<td>Jessica Vance, Assistant Health and Safety Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document approved by:</td>
<td>Director of Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead contact:</td>
<td>Jessica Vance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 1

### University of Bristol General risk assessment form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: (1)</th>
<th>Assessed by: (2)</th>
<th>Checked by: (3)</th>
<th>Assessment ref no: (4)</th>
<th>Review date: (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description and location of hazard (6)</th>
<th>Who might be harmed (7)</th>
<th>Existing control measures (8)</th>
<th>A. Likely severity of injury (1 to 3) (9)</th>
<th>B. Likely occurrence (1 to 3) (10)</th>
<th>Risk rating (A) x (B) (11)</th>
<th>Comments / Actions (12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A: Severity of injury:</th>
<th>Column B: Likely occurrence:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Injury or death</td>
<td>Regular exposure of several employees to hazard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury requiring medical treatment</td>
<td>Occasional exposure of few employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor or no injury</td>
<td>Exposure to hazard very rare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Risk score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk score</th>
<th>Response times</th>
<th>Risk score</th>
<th>Response times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Immediate cessation of activity until interim controls are agreed and implemented</td>
<td>3&amp;4</td>
<td>Review on change of process or if circumstances change. Provide additional training, supervision and monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Critically examine the areas of exposure in the process and agree timetable for completion of all agreed actions</td>
<td>&lt;3</td>
<td>12 months review (date of next audit). No real changes in procedure required to reduce risk further</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Page 8 of 10
Risk assessment policy and guidance

Health and Safety Office
Version 2.0
Notes on completing risk assessment form

The above form is used on the University risk assessment training courses run by Occupational Safety and Health. It is recommended that you use this form for general risk assessments: however, it is not compulsory that you do so.

(1) Insert date that the assessment is completed
(2) Insert name and signature of the competent person completing the form
(3) The assessment will normally be checked and signed by a line manager, supervisor, principal investigator etc.
(4) This section provides an area for any school/department local risk assessment reference number
(5) Insert the date when the risk assessment will be reviewed; it is recommended that this is annually or sooner if there are any significant changes or accidents/incidents.
(6) Add the description on the location and the hazard. Look for all the hazards: include those that are significant and less obvious ones. The number of rows on the assessment is unlimited, how many are used for one assessment will depend on how the work activity/event has been sub-divided.
(7) Insert everyone who might be harmed by the activity and especially those groups who may be specifically at risk. Include cleaners, security staff, students, members of the public etc.

(8) List all existing control measures that are currently in place. Start by considering whether the risk can be completely eliminated. List any control measures that are legal requirements then, consider whether generally accepted industry standards are in place. But don’t stop there – the law states that employers must do what is reasonably practicable to keep the workplace safe. Include supervision arrangements, instruction and training.

(9), (10) and (11) The simple matrix arrangement can be used to provide an indication of risk rating. Select a score of 1, 2 or 3 for the severity of injury that the assessor believes the hazard could cause (see below) and add to column (9). Next select the score for the likely occurrence for the hazard occurring. This is the score after the existing control measures have been applied; add to column (10). Column (11) is the sum of severity of injury (9) x likely occurrence (10) = (11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Column A:Severity of Injury</th>
<th>Column B:Likely Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Major Injury or death</td>
<td>Regular exposure of several employees to hazard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Injury requiring medical treatment</td>
<td>Occasional exposure of few employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Minor or no injury</td>
<td>Exposure to hazard very rare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This simple scoring system is not based on quantitative methods but is designed to give a simple estimate of risk quantitatively. The table below gives an indication of what action is necessary dependent on the number reached in (11). This is a guide only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Score</th>
<th>Response Times</th>
<th>Risk Score</th>
<th>Response Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Immediate cessation of activity until interim controls are agreed and implemented</td>
<td>3&amp;4</td>
<td>Review on change of process or if circumstances change. Provide additional training, supervision and monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Critically examine the areas of exposure in the process and agree timetable for completion of all agreed actions</td>
<td>&lt;3</td>
<td>12 months review (date of next audit). No real changes in procedure required to reduce risk further</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(12) Add any comments into this section, appropriate comments would include when PAT testing is scheduled to be completed or that currently the building is being refurbished or that further information is required.

(13) The risk assessment may identify that further action is required to ensure that all what is reasonably practicable has been done to keep the workplace safe. Use the action plan to record what needs to be done, who is responsible for completing the action and when it has been achieved.