



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Health and Safety Guidance

Supervisor's Health and Safety Responsibilities

GUIDANCE/30/SHSR/12

This Guidance is issued to assist those with responsibility for supervising staff or students. Individuals holding such titles as team leader, coordinator, principal investigator, or manager may be considered 'supervisors' in the context of this Guidance. The role of the Supervisor carries with it a number of health and safety responsibilities, this Guidance document outlines those responsibilities and duties.

Further information and advice may be obtained from the Health and Safety Unit.

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Supervisor's Responsibilities

INTRODUCTION

The term 'supervisor' is commonly used in Higher Education to refer primarily to those individuals who deal with students or who engage in research. However for the purposes of health and safety law many other members of staff may also have a supervisory function. An employee of the University may be considered to be a supervisor if he/she has the power and authority to give instructions and/or orders to subordinates, and be held responsible for the work and actions of other employees, or those under their day-to-day control. Individuals holding such titles as team leader, coordinator, principal investigator, or manager therefore may be considered 'supervisors' if these criteria apply and for the purposes of this Policy will hereafter be referred to as 'supervisors'.

The role of the supervisor carries with it a number of responsibilities. It is the supervisor's role to organise their section and staff, visualise future developments, its impacts and needs and supervise the work undertaken; ensuring not only that productivity and quality standards are met, but that all arrangements established for health and safety and welfare are adequately followed. To ensure that this is done, health and safety supervision should be integrated into the normal arrangements for overall supervision i.e. the role of the supervisor should be to ensure that work is performed satisfactorily and safely.

Supervision is an integral part of controlling risks that may arise from University activities. The nature and degree of supervision will vary according to the risks associated with the work, the environment and the knowledge and experience of the worker. Supervisors must therefore assess the need for supervision; assumptions should not be made about the experience, aptitude, understanding, or competence of any new member of staff, or visitor.

*More information on assessing the level of supervision required can be found in *Guidance for Academic Supervisors and Others who may be Supervising Academic Work: GUIDANCE/16/SAW/00*
<https://www.intranet.bham.ac.uk/university/hsu/documents/hsguidance/16SAW.pdf>

The key elements of good Health and Safety Supervision are:

- Risk Assessment
- Training (Information, Instruction & Records)
- Supervision
- Monitoring

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment is a systematic process to evaluate the risks associated with work activities and a means by which appropriate measures are established and implemented to minimise the risk. Risk assessment is a vital tool in planning and organising work and establishing procedures.

Supervisors must ensure that 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments are undertaken and recorded for all activities with significant risk, and that any measures decided upon in the assessment are discussed fully with those involved in the work and that all control measures are properly implemented.

To produce a 'Suitable and Sufficient' risk assessment the following requirements should be met:

- Ensure the correct person undertakes the assessment – i.e. they are competent
- Outline the activity or area under assessment – always be specific
- Identify all hazards
- Identify all people who may be affected
- Evaluate the risk – the likelihood of it occurring
- Identify the controls required to reduce the risk 'as low as reasonably practicable' considering the hierarchy of control.
- Document the key points – the greater the risk, the greater the detail required
- Sign and date the risk assessment
- Review the assessment regularly, when there is a change in procedure and in the event of an accident or ill health

TRAINING (INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION & RECORD KEEPING)

The provision of information, instruction, and training on health and safety is one of the basic facets of successful risk management and a fundamental requirement of legislation. Staff, students and visitors must be provided with relevant information relating to the risks associated with their work and any relevant control measures.

Information can be communicated in a number of ways:

Written communication – Standard Operating Procedures, Method Statements, Risk Assessments, Use of appropriate 'visual' signs

Verbal communication – Training, induction, explaining 'real' risks, demonstration of techniques and use of control measures

Visible behaviour - Leading by example, avoiding mixed messages

Supervisors must be satisfied that the individual under instruction has been made aware of and advised to read relevant documentation, understands the health and safety requirements and the consequences of non-compliance. Where equipment is used as a control measure, its proper use must be demonstrated and the worker advised of any routine checks to be undertaken that indicate normal function.

The maintenance of training records is an important feature of training; it serves as evidence that an individual has received information/instruction on a given topic. Supervisors should maintain records of any specialist or on the job training provided and formally sign off individuals who have attained competence in particular aspects of their work. Training records should always be signed by both trainer and trainee.

SUPERVISION

Supervisors must ensure that:

- the required levels of student and staff health and safety supervision are established in advance of the work
- other persons deputed to carry out the supervision at their request are competent to do so
- persons being supervised are aware of the arrangements made for their supervision and the local arrangements for out-of-hours working

In general, health and safety supervision should be integrated into the normal arrangements for overall supervision i.e. the role of the supervisor should be to ensure that work is performed satisfactorily and safely. In a few special situations, other health and safety supervision arrangements may be necessary, and this is dealt with below.

Taken overall, the nature and degree of supervision required will vary according to circumstances, particularly the risks associated with the work and the knowledge and experience of the worker. **Supervisors must therefore assess the level of supervision.**

The supervisor has to make a judgement on how often to be present with the person being supervised. Persons with little training, experience or skill will need close supervision even for quite simple tasks, but this can be reduced as skill and experience develop.

For low risk work, little health and safety supervision will be necessary, but for higher risk work where the situation could develop in an unexpected and hazardous way, then close supervision is essential. The levels of supervision appropriate will depend on several factors in particular

- The nature of the work
- The nature of the persons doing the work and supervising
- The work environment, including when it is done

Further information on these factors and information on deciding the appropriate level of supervision can be found in the University guidance document; Guidance for Academic Supervisors and Others who may be Supervising Academic Work, GUIDANCE/16/SAW/00)

MONITORING

Supervisors should regularly monitor the work conducted under their control; to check on progress and ensure that quality standards are being maintained. This includes monitoring compliance with risk assessments, enforcing the correct use of control measures and taking action against those who fail to comply.

Monitoring health and safety performance reinforces the supervisor's commitment to health and safety and helps in developing a positive health and safety culture.

Two types of monitoring systems are required:

Active Monitoring

- Provides an organisation with feedback on its performance **before** an accident, incident or ill health
- Assists in providing a firm basis for decisions about improvements in risk control
- Monitors the extent of compliance with risk assessments and standards and the achievement of specific plans and objectives
- Active monitoring includes; inspections, development of action plans, direct observation of work and behavior, periodic review of documentation and reports delivered to Health and Safety Committees

Reactive Monitoring

- Triggered after an event, such as an accident, incident or near miss
- Provides an opportunity to check performance, learn from mistakes, and improve the health and safety and risk control
- Reactive monitoring includes; accident, incident or near miss reporting and investigation and reporting of occurrences of ill health

Supervisors should ensure that areas and work under their control are inspected regularly, action points in College and School Action Plans are implemented and all accidents, incidents and near misses are reported, the cause(s) investigated and action(s) to prevent a reoccurrence implemented.

HEALTH AND SAFETY DUTIES OF SUPERVISORS

- (a) be conversant with the University's health and safety policies and departmental local rules
- (b) ensure that staff, students, or visiting workers for whom they are responsible receive suitable induction training and information about emergency procedures
- (c) ensure the necessary risk assessments have been done, control measures are in place and the health and safety provisions relating to the work discussed with those doing it
- (d) ensure that relevant health and safety documentation is readily available for consultation and reference
- (e) ensure that those under their supervision have received instruction and training appropriate to their needs and that health and safety considerations are integrated into this training
- (f) document the training given to individuals and ensure it is signed off
- (g) ensure that the work environment and equipment are safe and well maintained
- (h) identify and correct hazardous conditions
- (i) investigate accidents or incidents and revise risk assessments, where necessary
- (j) ensure that relevant staff* are registered with the Occupational Health Service, and that they attend health surveillance appointments when required. * For example, those working with reportable substances or exposed to high levels of noise or vibration
- (k) monitor compliance with risk assessments, enforce the control measures and take action against those who fail to comply
- (l) ensure proper disposal of waste materials