



RISK ASSESSMENT

INFORMATION SHEET

WHY DO I NEED TO DO A RISK ASSESSMENT?

There is a legislative requirement to identify reasonably foreseeable hazards and to either eliminate or minimise the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable.

WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THE RISK ASSESSMENT?

Workers who are directly affected by the work which is being completed must be included in the completion of the risk assessment. A risk assessment may be completed in a team approach, such as everyone involved in completing a research project, or those involved in teaching a practical. Subject matter experts may be consulted as required. Risk assessments may incorporate (and at a minimum must consider) activities completed by Technical Support Services staff.

HOW MUCH DETAIL IS REQUIRED?

Risk assessments only need to incorporate as many details as is commensurate with the level of risk.

CAN RISK ASSESSMENTS BE COMBINED?

Where similar or identical activities are being conducted, risk assessments can be combined but should reference each activity being covered. Where someone new is introduced to an activity which has already been documented in a risk assessment, that person is required to read the assessment and may sign a declaration saying they have read and understood it before work commencing. A new risk assessment isn't required.

WHO SHOULD APPROVE RISK ASSESSMENTS?

The person with line management responsibility for the activity documented in the risk assessment is required to sign off and approve such assessment. It is not possible to be definitively prescriptive regarding who this may be, as it will depend upon specific circumstances. It may be a Director of Academic Program (DAP), Research Supervisor, Director of Research, Director of HDR, etc.

Amendments to the risk assessment template have been made to articulate what an approver is approving. Failure to approve a risk assessment, without reason, may constitute a breach of their duties under Section 28 (c)(d) of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW).

HOW LONG ARE RISK ASSESSMENTS VALID FOR?

The control measures that you put in place should be reviewed regularly to make sure they work as planned. Risk assessments are valid for a maximum of 3 years, but must be reviewed:

- when the control measure is not effective in controlling the risk
- before a change at the workplace that is likely to give rise to a new or different health and safety risk
- if a new hazard or risk is identified
- if the results of consultation indicate that a review is necessary
- if a health and safety representative requests a review

WHERE SHOULD RISK ASSESSMENTS BE STORED?

Risk assessments and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) must be kept for at least 5 years from when they're no longer valid, unless otherwise prescribed in the WHS Regulations 2017 (NSW).

Each School and Division is responsible for ensuring records are adequately stored and kept. Ideally these records will be kept in a central location to allow collaboration and sharing between disciplines.

ARE THERE RISK ASSESSMENT TRAINING COURSES AVAILABLE?

Yes. The Work Health and Safety Unit run a risk assessment training throughout the year. These sessions can be found on MyCareers Online. The Work Health and Safety Unit also run Hazardous Chemical training and Biosafety training.

I HAVE NO EXPERIENCE COMPLETING A RISK ASSESSMENT, WHERE DO I START?

Risk assessments are essentially the systematic identification of tasks in an activity, determining how these tasks may cause harm to people, and weighing up whether there are enough mechanisms in place to prevent such harm.

The [Code of Practice - How to manage work health and safety risks](#) provides a detailed guide on each step in the risk management process. Alternatively, you can contact the [Work Health and Safety Unit](#) for help or guidance, attend a risk assessment training session, or ask a [Health and Safety Representative](#) for assistance.

ADDITIONAL CONTROLS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED WHICH HAVE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If additional controls have been identified, these must be documented in the second part of Step 7 on the risk assessment form. Resources required, such as financial resources, and the person with a financial delegation (e.g. School Manager or Deputy Dean) to approve the procurement of necessary controls must be documented.

CAN WORK BEGIN BEFORE ADDITIONAL CONTROLS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

In some instances, you may introduce temporary or short term control measures while waiting for additional or higher level controls to be sought. Endorsement of these higher level controls should be sought in the first place, to ensure that short term / temporary controls are just that. In these instances, work may be able to begin if risks are adequately controlled in the short term.

AN EXAMPLE OF RISK ASSESSMENT IN ACTION:

Physiotherapy has successfully created a single risk assessment which adequately covers teaching units taught within clinical laboratories by physiotherapy staff.

How this was achieved

Fortunately, practical's completed each year are generally similar, with some exceptions. Physiotherapy staff, technical support staff, a student from each year level, and a WHS representative were invited to participate in a risk assessment forum.

Separate forums were held to facilitate each step in the risk management process, task mapping, hazard identification, and risk control management. Workplace inspections, and a review of previous incidents contributed to this process. Collected information was compiled in the risk assessment and sent to each participant for provide feedback on.

Throughout the process, the need for financial endorsement was identified, documented and sought from persons with the appropriate delegation. While the process is ongoing this process provides an excellent example of how multiple risk assessments can be consolidated into one document through a process of effective consultation.