

Research OHS Risk Assessment Standard

Last Update: 27 July 2012
Owner: Manager OHS

This standard contains obligations for all managers and staff that control, carry out or supervise research work. This includes academic staff conducting research and managers who are responsible for laboratories and workshops. The standard also includes obligations on students who carry out research as part of their academic studies. The general provisions of the OHS Act apply to research work including the requirement to consult staff on safety matters.

The hazards involved in any research or experimental work must be identified and assessed before the work commences. If this does not occur then the University and the persons organising or controlling the work are exposed to action under the OHS legislation for not ensuring a safe system of work. This requirement includes not only scientific work but all research or experimental activities that are potentially hazardous.

Research Safety Management System

Where a faculty, school, institute or division carries out research work, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Head of School or Director will ensure that all research work complies with the general requirements of the OHS Act to provide a safe working environment and safe systems of work.

In particular, there must be management processes in place to:

- Review the health and safety of all research projects
- Identify the health and safety hazards and assess the risk associated with the project
- Put in place appropriate control measures to minimise the assessed health and safety risks.

When carrying out research work, a safe system of work will consist of:

- appropriate induction and training of staff and students and ongoing access to relevant information
- adequate supervision that takes into account the skill, knowledge and experience of staff and students
- established and documented work practices that take into account the hazards involved in the work
- appropriate facilities and equipment including personal protective clothing and equipment.

Each research project must have a designated Work Supervisor. The Work Supervisor may be the staff member who is sponsoring, coordinating or supervising the project. The Work Supervisor may be the same person as the Work Leader or may have no personal involvement on a daily basis with the Project. Nevertheless the Work Supervisor has full responsibility for the safe operation of the Project. The development of a Work Safety Assessment will assist the Work Supervisor in the process of due diligence.

If there are no hazards identified or those identified are not relevant to your particular work then a Work Safety Assessment need not be completed. However a note should be made that hazard identification has occurred: the [Work Safety Assessment Overview form](#) can be used for this purpose or it can be noted in the research documentation. If required, a more detailed assessment is carried out using the various hazard assessments on [biosafety](#), [chemical safety](#), [fieldwork](#), [physical, plant and process hazards](#) and [radiation](#). If these supplements are not appropriate further advice can be sought from the [Health Wellbeing and Safety](#).

The Work Safety Assessment is normally prepared by the Work Leader in consultation with the Work Supervisor. Even where projects are similar to past projects, the Work Leader should take time to review the health and safety aspects of the proposed project. The Work Leader may seek advice and guidance from the Laboratory Manager or equivalent as well as specialised contact officers (attached to each supplement). If practicable, Work Safety Assessment forms shall be started as part of the project proposal.

Work Supervisor

The Work Supervisor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Work Safety Assessment form and relevant supplements are completed and approved before the commencement of the Project and whenever there are major changes to the Project with the potential to affect health and safety
- Arranging the necessary approvals listed in the Work Safety Assessment
- Checking and verifying the risk assessment and the proposed control measures
- Verifying that control measures have been put in place and are adequately controlling the identified hazards
- Ensuring an annual internal review of the Project takes place (or more frequently as determined by the Work Safety Assessment)
- Revising the Work Safety Assessment whenever new processes or materials are used, or new hazards identified
- Ensuring written safety reports and assessments are provided when required.

The Work Supervisor is responsible for ensuring copies of the completed and approved Work Safety Assessment are filed in the Faculty/School Records and are available for audit.

Work Leader

The Work Leader is the staff member or student who is directly controlling the project on a daily basis. The Work Leader is responsible for:

- Providing all the necessary information to carry out a hazard identification and assessment
- Consulting with the local Laboratory Manager or equivalent on safety matters and to ensure adequate consultation with any staff members whose health and safety may be affected by the research project
- Investigating and implementing all the necessary control measures
- Documenting the hazard identification, assessment and control process
- Ensuring the control measures continue to work effectively and are adequately controlling the identified hazards
- Informing the Work Supervisor of any incident, information or result that reduces the validity or effectiveness of the initial Work Safety Assessment
- Keeping a copy of the Work Safety Assessment near where the work is being carried out.

In some cases the Work Leader may need to seek approval from Specialist Safety Officer or relevant Specialist Committee. The Specialist Safety Officer may be the University’s Radiation Safety Officer, University’s Biosafety Officer or a person nominated by the area. The Specialist Safety Officer/Committee may at their discretion require a more detailed or specific hazard assessment be carried out or require additional control measures.

Laboratory Managers and Other Specialist Safety Officers

Unless designated as the Work Supervisor or Work Leader, the Laboratory Manager’s or other specialist safety officer’s role is to provide advice where requested. The Laboratory Manager is normally only directly responsible for safety matters involving their laboratories, their staff or students being supervised by their staff. Where requested to provide advice, Laboratory Managers and other specialist safety officers should ensure they provide advice only within their limits of expertise and training. Approval by a Laboratory Manager or other specialist safety officer does not reduce the direct responsibility of the Work Supervisor or Work Leader for the Work Safety Assessment and the implementation of any control measures.

Research Project - Minimum Compliance Requirements

Responsibility	Requirement	Tools, Notes
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Head of School or Director	Ensure a safe system of work covering research work	This document

Responsibility	Requirement	Tools, Notes
Work Leader	Identify all the hazards associated with the project. Ensure the information is up to date and reflects current practices If there are no hazards identified or those identified are not relevant to the work then a Work Safety Assessment need not be completed. However a note should be made that hazard identification has occurred: the Work Safety Assessment Overview form can be used for this purpose.	Work Safety Assessment Overview Form
Work Leader	Complete any necessary hazard assessments	biosafety , chemical safety , fieldwork , physical, plant and process hazards and radiation
Work Leader	Implement any project specific risk control measures	
Work Leader	Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of control measures	
Work Supervisor	Obtain any necessary authorisations	
Work Supervisor	Ensure that staff, supervisors, and students have received sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to work safely	

Incident Reporting

All project team members must follow established University and local procedures and guidelines and must advise the Laboratory Manager (or equivalent) and the Work Supervisor of any identified inadequacies or defects in procedures and guidelines. An [on-line Accident and Hazard Report](#) or written [Accident/Hazard Report form](#) must be also completed.

LEGISLATION

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(Victoria\) 2004](#). The Act covers general safety requirements including the use of hazardous biological materials and radiation.
- [Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007](#). The regulations include specific requirements covering chemicals, plant and other physical hazards.
- [Radiation Act 2005](#). The Act outlines the requirements for the management of ionising radiation in the workplace, including licensing requirements, radiation safety principals and testing of radiation apparatus.,
- [Radiation Regulations 2007](#). The regulations prescribe dose limits, activity concentrations and activities of radionuclides and other specific requirements to facilitate compliance with the Radiation Act.
- [Dangerous Goods Act](#). The Act covers requirements for the manufacture, transfer, storage and use of chemicals classified as dangerous goods.
- [Dangerous Goods \(Storage and Handling\) Interim Regulations 2011](#). The regulations provide specific details on safety requirements including appropriate storage, placarding and provision of a manifest.

STANDARDS

- [Australian Standard 2243: Safety in Laboratories](#)
- The [Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency](#) (ARPANSA) publishes [Codes of Practice or Standards](#) and [Guidelines](#)