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Introduction

Deakin University is generally a safe place to work with very little risk of being subject to threats or violence. However there have been occasions where staff have subject to threats or have felt threatened. In these situations it is important to know what to do – at its simplest this means contacting Security.

Policy

1. The University will take reasonably practicable steps to ensure the security of staff and others in the workplace.

Responsibilities

Managers must ensure that all of their staff are aware of how to contact Security. This must be part of any induction. Staff should be also periodically reminded that all phones have a speed dial setting for Security.

Managers that have staff who deal directly with students or the public must discuss and develop with staff protocols to address "difficult" or "aggressive" clients. If there is a real risk of workplace violence then managers must under the OHS Act look at firstly prevention measures and then other control measures (mitigation and recovery).

Preventing Workplace Violence

The first prevention measure that must considered is whether it is possible to eliminate the risk completely. In practice this means discussing with staff situations or factors that can lead to threats or violence and how they can be avoided by changing work practices or means of communication. For example, eliminating the risk of armed robbery by not handling or storing cash.

If elimination is not practical, then reduction of the risk by engineering measures must be considered. This includes factors such as workplace design and elimination of higher risk work practices. Under the OHS Act designers are now required to take into account OHS issues in the design of workplaces and equipment. However managers still need to clearly communicate to the designers the risks that have been identified. Design considerations may be as simple as having locked doors or counters that cannot be jumped or easily

reached across. Work practice considerations include working alone or seeing clients in an isolated location where assistance is not readily available.

Mitigating Workplace Violence

If engineering controls are not sufficient to reduce the risk to an acceptable level, then threat reduction measures such as alarms, panic buttons and training must be considered.

Unfortunately there is no easy to learn standard response when presented with a threatening situation or even an assault. However there are techniques that can be used to diffuse a threatening situation. These techniques are not a guarantee of safety but they do reduce the chances of escalation and harm. These responses centre on body language, choice of words and listening technique.

Much of the advice about managing a confrontation with the violent or threatening person is sometimes described as common sense. However unless the techniques are practiced, they are unlikely to be reliably applied in an actual situation. These techniques include:

- Acting to defuse the situation. Avoiding provocative language. Never arguing, accusing or telling the person to calm down. Acting assertively but not aggressively whilst ignoring verbal abuse.
- Acknowledging the person's feelings without necessarily agreeing with them. Avoiding being judgmental or defensive.
- Maintaining physical space between you and the aggressor. Avoiding entering their "personal space"-- keeping a safe distance of 1 to 2 metres if possible.
- Remaining calm and using a quiet voice and neutral body language.
- Maintaining eye contact.
- Letting them vent awhile and listening sympathetically (lean forward, give eye contact, nod in recognition that you have heard what has been said). It might be appropriate to write down what is said.
- Looking for common ground or points of agreement. Express any concerns using 'I' messages. Acknowledge the validity of concerns and clarify the feelings of the person "I can see you're really upset by ….." Offer to talk now or later. If the aggressor is yelling, tell them it's easier to hear when they speak quietly. The key is to help the aggressor stay open to negotiation, counselling or positive resolution of the issue.
- Exhausting the list of complaints, then reading the list back, asking if it is complete. Help the aggressor devise possible solutions if realistic.
- Apologizing, if appropriate. Provide helpful verbal responses or short term options, if possible. Do not make promises that you cannot fulfil.
- When following up after a confrontation or difficult interaction, always allow cooling off time first before any mediation or follow up.

In reality it can be difficult when in a very stressful situation to apply these "common sense" rules. This diffusing approach is more likely to be effective if the staff member has been trained. Security and HWS Unit can assist with training in these techniques which are most effectively learned through experiential training. After a risk assessment carried out by the manager, the training must be provided to groups identified as medium to high risk.

Recovering from Workplace Violence

Even in the best controlled workplace there is still a risk of workplace violence. If it does occur managers must take steps to ensure that all affected parties (staff, students and themselves) have good support and any counselling necessary. If an event does occur, even a "minor" one, it must be investigated and appropriate lessons drawn.

Recommended Compliance Procedure

Methodology	Resources / Tools
Step 1: Identify workers (may include staff, students and contractors) involved in the at-risk activities	This involves looking at past experience and consulting with staff.
Step 2: Determine what are likely risks or risk factors	Consider: • The nature of the work carried out • The common practice of the University sector in the area or where relevant similar sectors • Seeking advice from Security and HWS Unit
Step 3: Develop a risk control strategy and plan	Review Appendix 1: Strategies to prevent, contain and recover from occupational violence Appendix 2: Sample Risk Assessment
Step 4: Update your Risk Register and document your risk assessments	
Step 5:Set up a system to train and refresh staff on security	

Related Documents and Links

- Campus Services Division (Security)
- Health, Wellbeing and Safety (HWS) Unit
- WorkSafe website Occupational violence and aggression (in particular using Preventing and responding to work-related violence: A guide for employers)
- Western Australian Code of Practice: Violence, Aggression and Bullying At Work.

DOCUMENT HISTORY	
Name of procedure	*Workplace OHS Security Instruction*
Overarching policy	*Health Wellbeing and Safety policy*
Original Date	*25 July 2007*
Review History	*24 June 2019* *Complete review and revision*
Author	*Michael O'Donoghue*

Appendix 1: Strategies to prevent, contain and recover from occupational violence

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Strategy	Specific examples
Elimination and Substitution	
Reduce or eliminate the handling of cash where practical	• electronic funds transfer including direct debit
Reduce or eliminate direct contact, where practical, with clients where there is a risk on confrontation	• handling queries / complaints effectively by phone and email • use of intelligent inter-active on-line processes to reduce client frustration and annoyance (with waiting times, and poorly targeted information) • providing relevant and easily understood information on the web
Reduce the risk of workplace violence at source	• identify and support individuals who may be "at risk" of resorting to violent behaviour • provide managers/supervisors with information and training on handling and managing workplace stress factors
Engineering Controls	
(1) target hardening	
isolate high risk areas through security controls	• high risk areas locked off and accessible only by passes • restrict and funnel access through control points
reduce face-to-face contact where there is a risk on confrontation	• use of electronic funds transfer • secure cashiers
reduce access to staff	• wider and higher counters at customer service workstations with raised floor height on staff side • easily accessible and safe refuges for staff in event of emergency • two exit doors in interview rooms
reduce the damage potential	• use of metal detectors • choose fittings that minimise their opportunity to be used as weapons
(2) increased visibility	• client contact occurs in public or highly visible places where possible • meet clients at neutral, public locations • use closed circuit television • high lighting levels • eliminate potential ambush or lurking points by choice and location of vegetation and interior layout
(3) decreased temptation and stressors	• provide comfortable air conditioned waiting areas • provide access to well maintained basic facilities including toilets and drinking water • provide clear signage and queue lines or system • use of time-locked safes • feedback about waiting times • use of clear appointment times where complex or long interactions are involved • streaming customer service depending upon complexity (fast lanes) • strategic presence and use of security personnel

Strategy	Specific examples
Administrative Controls	
appropriate University systems	• strong management commitment to zero-tolerance regarding workplace violence • effective policies covering workplace security and the management of physical threats and violence in the workplace • clear policies and procedures covering staff grievances, staff conduct and client interaction • provision of support services to staff and students • clear and effective disciplinary procedures
appropriate local systems	• engineering control measures maintained and tested • appropriate staffing levels that considers risk as well as workload • policies covering working alone and working off-site • systematic identification and assessment of "at risk" location and activities
learning cycle	• regular staff meetings in which issues are raised and appropriately actioned • reporting of all incidents • investigation and assessment of all incidents
audits and inspections	• regular workplace inspections • periodic professional audits
emergency planning	• site specific response plans developed • emergency plans routinely tested
Administrative Controls	
support training	• training and re-training of staff to ensure their effective use of engineering and administrative controls • thorough induction procedures to eliminate practices such as: • meeting students alone in isolated offices • haphazard approach to security at disciplinary hearings
Personal Protection	
alarms	• strategically placed duress alarms • check-in protocols for off-site personnel
Training	
customer service	• customer service training • clear service standards
"difficult client"	• provide staff with training on how to minimise the risk of workplace violence through appropriate behaviours and work practices

CONTAINMENT STRATEGIES

Many of the prevention strategies listed above will also help to contain and minimise the impact of a violent event. In particular training has a role. Nevertheless it must be emphasised that training is not a substitute for adequate protective measures both in practice and in law.

Strategy	Specific examples
Engineering Controls	
internal communications	• provide adequate arrangements to promptly alert security or other emergency services of an incident

Strategy	Specific examples
Administrative Controls	
effective response systems	• provide access to trained security staff • establish appropriate protocols and working practices for security staff • provide security staff with appropriate training in dealing with a diverse University community
Training	
"difficult client"	• provide staff with training on how to defuse tense or potentially violent situations • provide staff with training on dealing with threatening or violent situations

RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Strategy	Specific examples
Administrative Controls	
minimise risk of re-occurrence	• clear and effective disciplinary procedures that serve as a deterrence to further inappropriate behaviour and as a warning to others • clear understanding of legal remedies to discourage further inappropriate behaviour
learning cycle	• policies and procedures covering the investigation and reporting on serious security incidents
Victim Support	
support facilities and processes	• clear procedures to assist and support staff / students in their recovery from threatening or violent events • provide staff / students with access to debriefing and counselling resources

Appendix 2: Sample Risk Assessment

(Western Australian Code of Practice: Violence, Aggression and Bullying At Work)

1. THE WORKPLACE (Each YES answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Are money/valuables/drugs kept at the workplace?	YES/NO
Has violence or aggression been an issue in the past?	YES/NO
Are people affected by alcohol or other drugs?	YES/NO
Are customers likely to be angry or disgruntled?	YES/NO
Are there any other obvious reasons why workers or clients may become violent?	YES/NO
2. WORKERS (Each YES answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Do staff work alone or at night?	YES/NO
Do inexperienced staff deal with customers?	YES/NO
3. IDENTIFY, ASSESS AND CONTROL (Each NO answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Are all workplace violence reports analysed?	YES/NO
Are workers asked about risk of violence?	YES/NO
Are potentially violent people identified?	YES/NO
Are causes of potential violence identified?	YES/NO
Have risks of injury or harm been assessed?	YES/NO
Are there controls for averting violence?	YES/NO
Have they been used successfully?	YES/NO
Are workers consulted when developing the controls?	YES/NO
Is the safety of public/clients considered?	YES/NO
4. CONSULTATION AND CO-OPERATION (Each NO answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Is there a forum for violence and aggression to be discussed?	YES/NO
Does the safety and health representative check hazards?	YES/NO
Is there a procedure for reporting incidents?	YES/NO
Are all changes discussed with workers?	YES/NO
Are workers consulted?	YES/NO
5. VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN (Each NO answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Does your workplace have a violence prevention plan?	YES/NO
Was the plan drawn up in consultation with workers?	YES/NO
Does the plan cover identification, assessment and control?	YES/NO
Does the plan cover induction and training?	YES/NO
Does the plan set safe procedures for hazardous tasks?	YES/NO
Is there a security system in the workplace?	YES/NO
6. VIOLENCE RESPONSE PLAN (Each NO answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Does your workplace have a violence response plan?	YES/NO
Does the plan include first aid and medical support?	YES/NO
Does the plan include backup from police and emergency services?	YES/NO
Does the plan include prompt de-briefing and counselling?	YES/NO
Is an employee assistance service provided?	YES/NO
Is the plan reviewed after each violent situation?	YES/NO
7. TRAINING AND INFORMATION (Each NO answer indicates a risk of violence)	
Have staff been provided with relevant information about violence and aggression?	YES/NO
Have staff been trained to recognise and avoid potential violence, and defuse violence and aggression?	YES/NO
Do staff have interpersonal skills training?	YES/NO

Are there safe procedures for violent situations?	YES/NO
Do staff understand violence management procedures?	YES/NO
Are staff trained to report violent incidents?	YES/NO

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Note: this is an example only. A combination of controls may be required, depending on the circumstances of individual workplaces.

Name of Organisation: Late Night Video Store		Information collected by: J. Smith - Staff Supervisor			Date: xxxxxxx
Task and location	**Hazards**	**People affected**	**How often**	**Comments**	**Level of risk (record when risk assessment complete)**
1 Handling cash at the counter	Robbery	All workers and customers who may be there	All times	Check cash handling & alert procedures	Extreme
2 Serving customers at front counter	Counter staff & customers nearby maybe verbally abused and suffer physical violence from customers	All employees and customers who may be there	All times		Extreme
3 Handling drunken customers from pub next door	Verbal abuse and physical violence from customers	As above	Sometimes around pub closing time		High
4 Maintaining rosters and managing customer service staff	Customer service too slow resulting in unreasonable pressure on staff and irritated customers	Counter staff and customers waiting for service	Peak times	Need to move staff to front counter when a worker is off sick	High
5 One person rostered at night	Robbery	Night shift workers	After dark		Extreme
6 Handling cash in the office	Robbery	As above	Especially in quiet times	Need to review procedures	Extreme
7 Shoplifting	Physical violence if offenders are caught in the act	Worker who apprehends offender	At irregular times		Extreme

This form covers all workers and customers who may be affected by work in the video store.

CONTROLLING THE RISK

The following risk profile summarises the risk assessment and controls for the hazard "handling cash at the counter".

Location: Late Night Video Store		
Prepared by: D. Brown	Position: J. Smith - Staff Supervisor	Date prepared: xxxxxx
Task #: 1	Handling cash at the counter	Hazard: Robbery
Task Frequency: Very frequently	Risk level: Extreme	Comment: Weapons may be used in attempts to steal cash.

Preferred order of controls	Risk control What can be done to make the job safe	Person responsible Who makes sure it happens?	Completion	
			Date	Sign off
Elimination	Do not handle cash – use EFTPOS, credit cards or "store cards"	D. Brown (manager)		
Substitution	n/a			
Isolation	Install screens or barriers, such as anti-jump guards	D. Brown (manager)		
	Raise counter height to make jumping over more difficult and increase distance between staff and customers by placing confectionery stands in front of the counter	D. Brown (manager)		
	Install two sets of electronic doors controlled by staff	D. Brown (manager)		
Engineering	Consider the location of the shop in relation to surrounds and factors such as external lighting, other buildings etc	D. Brown (manager)		
	Lay out shop so staff can see out into car park and staff can easily be seen from outside eg raise work area for staff	D. Brown (manager)		
	Fit closed circuit TV cameras	D. Brown (manager)		
	Restrict "straight through" access by customers eg using planters, displays etc	D. Brown (manager)		
	Use time-delay drop safes	D. Brown (manager)		
Administration	Watch for and report all suspicious circumstances for further action as necessary	J. Smith (supervisor)		
	Employ security staff to visit branches at regular intervals to gauge security consciousness and offer advice	D. Brown (manager)		
	Appoint a staff member to maintain liaison with the local police crime prevention officer	J. Smith (supervisor) & staff member		
	Train staff in procedures to be followed if a robbery occurs	J. Smith (supervisor)		
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	PPE not appropriate for video store staff			