

Accountabilities and Requirements for Health and Safety Risk Registers

Summary of legislative requirements

Health and Safety risk management is a major component of an employer's obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (The Act)*, the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* and the *How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks Code of Practice 2011*. As an employer, the University, through its managers and supervisors, must ensure that staff, students, contractors and visitors are not exposed to risks to their health and safety arising out of the conduct of the University's activities.

Legislation requires employers to assess the risks posed by hazards in their workplace and to determine how best to modify their work processes to effectively eliminate or control these risks as far as reasonably practicable. Rather than imposing prescriptive requirements for all hazards and work environments, the legislation requires employers to take reasonable precautions and exercise proper diligence to determine the most practicable way to manage risk. This must be done in consultation with staff. Risk management is basically the identification and assessment of risk, consideration of measures to eliminate or control the risk, the implementation of those control measures and the monitoring and review of their effectiveness. Appendix 1 summarises the relevant requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Regulation*.

Responsibility for Risk Management

Deputy and Pro Vice Chancellors, Deans and Administrative Directors are responsible for ensuring that health and safety risks are managed (identified, assessed, controlled and monitored) within their areas of responsibility. Heads of School and Research Centre Directors are responsible for ensuring that health and safety risks and control measures in their element are documented in a risk register; and that these registers are reviewed at least annually, or when there is a change in processes, to materials or equipment. They must also ensure that action is undertaken to address risks which are inadequately controlled.

Course conveners are responsible for ensuring any health and safety risks associated with delivery of their course have been assessed, and appropriate control measures determined and implemented. Research Leaders are responsible for ensuring any health and safety risks associated with the conduct of their research have been assessed and appropriate control measures determined and implemented. Research Leaders must ensure that all participants in their research have been appropriately inducted and trained. Risk assessments may need to be conducted on individual activities, equipment or substances in order to determine the most appropriate control measures. Technical and Health and Safety staff are able to assist in the risk assessment process.

All staff are responsible for assessing and controlling risks associated with activities that are carried out as part of teaching, research or administrative work in order to minimise risks to health and safety of other staff, students, and in some cases visitors who may be affected by these activities.

Risk Registers

Each Element within the University (including Schools, Departments, Research Centre's and Institutes) has established Risk Registers. This is a documented **summary** of identified health and safety risks, including an assessment of risk severity, along with current and recommended controls within the Element.

The register lists broad hazards under several hazard categories (e.g. Chemical, Physical, Biological, Psychological), the control measures currently in place or recommended, an estimate of the level of risk before and after the control measures are implemented, and the person(s) responsible for overseeing and reporting on the control measures.

As an example, hazards categorised under 'Chemical' would refer to broad causes of what can go wrong (e.g. spillage leading to chemical burn), an overall estimate of the level of (collective) risk and the range of controls in place (e.g. decanting procedures, wearing protective gloves) rather than referring to specific chemicals e.g. hydrofluoric acid', or 'ammonium chloride', which require separate risk assessments and specific control measures according to how they may be used.

Risk Registers are developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and are signed off by the Head of the Element. They must be reviewed and signed off at least annually in conjunction with health and safety staff, or when there is some change in activities (e.g. to processes, materials, or equipment).

It is important that the process of preparing and reviewing Risk Registers is used to identify any areas of risk for which control measures are either not in place or inadequate. From this information, prioritised action plans must be prepared to address those risks. Progress on these action plans should be reviewed at faculty/group meetings and at the Element Health and Safety Committee meeting.

Risk registers are important documents as part of Griffith University's health and safety management system and hence need to properly reflect identified hazards and risks and the control measures in place within work areas to manage the risks. Maintenance of Risk Registers constitutes evidence that the University, through its managers, is taking reasonable precautions and using due diligence to manage risks associated with its activities and operations, as required by legislation.

Risk Assessments

Risk Assessments are individual assessments of activities, processes, substances or items of plant to determine the level of risk. As a result of this determination, a number of control measures need to be decided and then put in place to either eliminate or reduce the risk as far as reasonably practicable. Course conveners are required to assess risks associated with their courses prior to the start of each semester, and ensure that appropriate control measures are implemented to minimise the risk of injury or illness to students or staff. The outcome of these assessments may contribute to a single line in a Risk Register.

Appendix 1 - Summary of requirements from Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011

s34 Duty to Identify Hazards

A duty holder, in managing risks to health and safety, must identify reasonably foreseeable hazards that could give rise to risks to health and safety.

s35 Management of risk

A duty holder, in managing risks to health and safety, must—

- (a) eliminate risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable; and
- (b) if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks to health and safety—minimise those risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

s36 Hierarchy of control

If the duty holder cannot eliminate the risk, then they must minimise the risk as far as reasonably practicable using the hierarchy of control, in the following order:

- i. *substituting the hazard giving rise to the risk with a hazard giving rise to a lesser risk;*
- ii. *isolating the hazard giving rise to the risk from anyone who may be at risk;*
- iii. *minimising the risk by engineering means;*
- iv. *applying administrative measures;*
- v. *using personal protective equipment.*

Part 3.1 Managing Risks to Health and Safety

The risk management process is outlined in brief as:

- a) *identify hazards; and*
- b) *assess risks that may result because of the hazards; and*
- c) *decide on appropriate control measures to prevent, or minimise the level of, the risks; and*
- d) *implement control measures; and*
- e) *monitor and review the effectiveness of the measures.*

s39 Provision of information, training and instruction

The person in control of an area, or has influence in how that area operates must ensure that information, training and instruction is provided.

S39(2) The person must ensure that information, training and instruction provided to a worker is suitable and adequate having regard to—

- (a) the nature of the work carried out by the worker; and
- (b) the nature of the risks associated with the work at the time the information, training or instruction is provided; and
- (c) the control measures implemented.

S39(3) The person must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, *that the information, training and instruction is provided in a way that is readily understandable by any person to whom it is provided*