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1. OBJECTIVE

This Work Instruction is designed to assist in the assessment of health, safety and wellbeing (HSW) risk and suggested controls associated with hazards identified while working, learning and / or conducting research throughout RMIT.

2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of an HSW risk assessment is to identify hazards associated with activities, tasks, plant / equipment, hazardous materials or work/learning/research environment and implement controls to reduce the risk of injury, illness, impact on property and/or environment.

3. SCOPE

This process applies to all RMIT staff, students, researchers and third parties, globally, including off campus activities within RMIT control. It is specifically for the purpose of identifying and managing HSW risk for works and learning under RMIT control. Refer to **RMIT HSW Third Party Framework** for further guidance on the way third parties will be managed by RMIT in relation to risk management.

NOTE – Referenced legislation applies to Australian jurisdictions only. RMIT campuses in other jurisdiction must refer to local applicable legislation, where available.

4. PROCEDURE/IMPLEMENTATION

HSW Risk assessment is the process of:

- Determining the hazards to health, safety and wellbeing that exist for a task, activity, plant / equipment, hazardous materials or work/learning/research environment
- Determining the importance of each hazard by assigning it a current risk rating with existing controls
- Formulating proposed risk control measures that are reasonably practicable to apply, that will reduce the risk rating (residual risk) to an acceptable level (see **HSW Risk Acceptance**)
- Documenting all these matters using a HSW Risk Assessment template (including in P.R.I.M.E., or equivalent).

Senior Leaders and Operational Leaders must ensure that all reasonably foreseeable or identified hazards in their area of responsibility and control are risk assessed using the **HSW-PR09 - HSW Risk Management** process and guidance tools.

Risk assessments must involve consultation with staff, students, researchers, third parties and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), where applicable, who are undertaking a task / activity or acquiring / using equipment / hazardous materials, so that they can provide input and advice. This is outlined in the **HSW-PR07 – Consultation & Communication** process. Other persons with specific technical skills may also be required to be involved in the risk assessment process and to assist with recommending risk control measures.

In addition to consultation with stakeholders, risk assessments should be completed by more than one person. A more collaborative process provides a better degree of objectivity resulting in a quality risk assessment.

NOTE - Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) - HSRs are a legislative requirement in Victoria and Australia. Other jurisdictions can choose to follow these consultation requirements, if local legislation does not exist.

4.1. Methodology

When conducting a risk assessment, the following steps are involved:

- Identifying the activities / tasks / plant / equipment / hazardous materials / environment
- Identifying hazards relating to each step for the activity / task / equipment / hazardous materials / environment
- Identifying single or multiple risk factors associated with the identified hazards
- Detailing any current and implemented risk control measures
- Initial assessment of each hazard and associated risks
- Implementing additional risk controls (as per hierarchy of controls)
- Residual assessment of each hazard and associated risks
- Assigning responsibility for implementing any additional risk controls
- Authorisation of risk assessment

4.1.1. Identify the Activity/Task/Plant & Equipment/Hazardous Material/Work or Study Environment

The activity / task / plant & equipment / hazardous material / work or study environment to be controlled must be described in full. The location where activity / task / plant & equipment / hazardous material is taking place or being used must also be identified as it may influence the controls required.

4.1.2. Identify who is at Risk and Risk Factors

A staff / student / researcher / third party may think that as they are conducting the work or learning that they are the only person at risk. In a laboratory, for example, staff, students, researchers or third parties in the vicinity of that work are at risk also. On field trips other participants may be at risk, for instance in quarries, in boats, etc. The public may be at risk when monitoring traffic movements or when constructing research sites.

The impact of an activity on others influences the type of risk controls that may need to be in place. Consider all the people who could be affected by the work e.g., staff, third parties, students, researchers, visitors, members of the public. It may be useful to consult with other persons that could be affected by the work.

Identification of the Risk Factors associated with the activity / task / plant & equipment / hazardous material / work or study environment enables the staff/student/researcher to select more than one risk type e.g., the use, storage and transport of hazardous materials, hazardous manual handling, temperature, security etc. Not all risk assessments will have multiple risk factors.

4.1.3. Identify the Activities / Tasks

The activity description is designed to outline each step contained within the Risk Assessment. There is no limit to the number of steps which can be contained in each risk assessment. This is to provide the assessor the opportunity to break each activity / task / use into smaller stages to assess each hazard and risk effectively.

4.1.4. Identify the Hazards

A hazard is a source of potential harm or a situation with the potential to cause harm. There may be more than one hazard for a step in the activity / task.

Hazards can arise from (not exclusively):

- The work, research and learning environment
- The use of plant and hazardous materials
- Poor work design or practices
- Location of research activities
- Inappropriate management systems and processes
- Human behaviour
- Emergency situations

Numerous methods and sources of information can be used to identify hazards associated with the activity, such as and not exclusively:

- Discuss with supervisors (Operational Leaders) about the substances and methods to be used
- Information from manufacturers of plant and equipment
- Information from suppliers of chemicals, e.g., Safety Data Sheets (SDS's)
- Australian and International Standards
- National, International State and Industry Codes of Practice
- Local workplace inspection reports
- Incident data for the local area
- Inspection and Testing Reports
- Subject matter experts (SMEs)

Academic supervisors, laboratory/technical managers, HSRs and other relevant stakeholders must be consulted to ensure that all hazards are identified.

NOTE –Risk assessment templates for plant & equipment, hazardous manual handling, working at heights, first aid and psychosocial risks will have pre-determined hazards / questions (as a minimum). This aligns with guidance from Regulators and best practice methodology. Colleges/portfolios may include similar pre-determined hazards questions for hazardous materials, radiation and laser risk assessments. Further guidance is provided in process documents.

4.1.5. Identify Associated Risk of the Activity/Task/Plant & Equipment/Hazardous Material/Work or Study Environment

Risk identification is a similar process to hazard identification except that you need to identify the harm that can be caused. For example, an identified hazard may be a chemical, however the associated risk is from exposure to the chemical such as burns to skin, eyes or inhalation whilst the chemical is being used or stored

4.1.6. Identify Existing Control Measures

Identification of any existing control measures allows the assessor to accurately determine the current risk rating. If it is a new task, piece of equipment or research project, there may not be any controls.

Some examples of existing controls may include:

- Machine Guarding
- Operating Manual
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Safety Data Sheet

4.1.7. Identify the Risk Rating

Rating the risk helps to prioritise the implementation of additional control measures e.g., if an assessment identifies a trip hazard as low and a fire hazard as critical, then controlling the fire hazard is the priority. To identify the risk rating: consider what the consequences and likelihood would be.

4.1.8. Consequence

When estimating the consequences of harm from each hazard, consider:

- What consequence type is present (e.g., People, Safety and Environment, Financial)
- What type of harm will occur (e.g., strain, laceration, burn, amputation, death)
- How many people are exposed (e.g., a crane collapse on a busy road will be more severe than a collapse in a remote location due to the number of people who could be harmed)

- Could one failure lead to another (e.g., failure of electrical supply will stop local exhaust ventilation)
- Could it escalate to a more serious event (e.g., a small fire could get out of control in an area where there is a lot of combustible material).

4.1.9. Likelihood

Likelihood is not independent of consequence. It correlates with consequence. i.e., what is the likelihood of the consequence you identified occurring?

When estimating the Likelihood of harm occurring consider exposure and Probability:

- how often is there any exposure (e.g., once a day/once a month)
- how long are people exposed to the hazard (e.g., 5 minutes or several hours)
- how close are people to the hazard (e.g., there may be a moving part but people don't go near it)
- could any changes increase the likelihood (e.g., deadlines causing people to rush)
- does the environment affect the hazard (e.g., very poor lighting)
- what are the behaviours or attitudes of the people exposed (e.g., young people may be less risk-aware, or shift-workers may be fatigued)
- how effective are current control measures
- the likelihood that the consequence will occur once the individual is exposed, and
- has it caused an injury in the past, at RMIT or elsewhere.

4.1.10. Risk Rating

Once you have determined the consequence and likelihood, calculate the risk rating using the **HSW-PR09-WI02 – HSW Risk Matrix** which will then determine if the risk is low, medium, high or critical. The **HSW Risk Matrix** is also included in **HSW-PR09-TM01 – HSW Risk Assessment Template**.

4.1.11. HSW Risk Acceptance

A risk acceptance occurs when a decision is made to tolerate a risk, without implementing additional treatments (over and above any existing controls already in place) to further reduce the risk exposure.

After assessing and understanding the risk, a risk acceptance may be undertaken for several reasons. These include if risk exposures are within known tolerances, if the costs of implementing additional treatments outweigh the potential benefits, or if stakeholders with the right levels of authority and delegation deem it appropriate to do so.

The process detailed **RMIT Risk Management Manual** must be followed in the event that a risk level of Medium or greater is deemed acceptable.

4.1.12. Identify Appropriate Controls to be Added

To identify what control measures are needed:

- Check resources such as legislation, Code of Practice/Compliance Code and/or Australian or International Standards for required / recommended control measures
- Check the manufacturers guidance and/or any industry standards
- Check with other Schools/Work Areas and/or businesses if they have a similar hazard and how have they successfully controlled it
- Ask staff, students, researchers and/or third parties if they have any solutions to the hazards they face
- Consult subject matter experts

When deciding to implement control measures, you must consult with relevant staff, students, researchers or third parties to make sure that the controls are suitable, as these people will know the activity / task / equipment / hazardous material / work or study environment best and will have to work with the control measure on a day-to-

day basis. You must also consider if these controls may introduce any new hazards which will need to be managed. For example, introducing a conveyor system to reduce manual handling may result in several additional hazards, including pinch points and falling loads.

The **HSW-PR09-WI03 – HSW Risk Control** provides guidance on identifying appropriate risk controls.

4.1.13. Supervision

Guidance on supervision is detailed in **HR – HSW-PR09-WI05 – Supervision**.

4.1.14. Re-rate the Risk

In order to assess if the additional risk controls will be sufficient to reduce the risk, the activity must be re-assessed. The resulting risk ratings are known as Residual Risk Rating.

4.1.15. Implement the Risk Controls

The risk controls identified in the assessment must be assigned to a person who will responsible their implementation. If training is required, e.g., for a bio-safety cabinet or piece of plant, then this must be done prior to using it.

4.2. Authorisation of HSW Risk Assessment

All HSW risk assessments must be authorised by the supervisor (Operational Leader) of the activity, this must be completed prior to any work, learning or research commencing. In addition to the supervisor, if works are being conducted in specific work areas, such as laboratories or workshops, and the Residual Risk Ratings are assessed as Medium or higher, then the manager (Senior Leader) of those spaces must also authorise the activity, task, plant/equipment, hazardous material or work/learning environment.

All Risk Assessments must be reported as per the table below.

Residual risk after additional controls have been implemented.

Risk rating	Frequency of Review	Reporting Level
Critical	Risk must be reviewed at least every 6 months	Risk must be approved, visible and reported to at least the Vice Chancellor's Executive level (or equivalent)
High	Risk must be reviewed at least every 6 months	Risk must be visible and reported to at least the Executive Director level (or equivalent)
Medium	Risk must be reviewed at least annually	Risk must be visible and reported to at least the Director level (or equivalent)
Low	Risk must be reviewed at least annually	Risks must be visible and reported to at least the Senior Manager level (or equivalent)

4.3. Monitor and Review the Risk Controls

The risk controls must be working to ensure that the risks have been reduced to the lowest risk level that is reasonably practicable. A monitoring plan such as a Risk Register must be in-place, to ensure the risk controls are operating as designed.

5. Definitions

Defines any key terms and acronyms relating to the process where they apply.

Term / acronym	Definition
Consequence	The most probable result of interaction with the hazard
Hazard	Any situation that has the potential to cause injury or illness, harm to health and/or danger to property or the environment.
Operational Leaders	<p>Any staff member of RMIT who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plans, organises or supervises the activities of other staff, contractors, students or visitors on behalf of RMIT; or• Designs or organises the design, maintenance or refurbishment of facilities on behalf of RMIT• A staff member, such as a Chief Investigator, who has accountability for the conduct or supervision of research. <p>This includes all managers, senior accountants, senior administrators, course coordinators, team leaders, industry fellows, research fellows, teachers, senior educators and lecturers.</p>
Probability	The likelihood that the consequence will occur once exposed to the hazard
Risk	<p>A risk arises when it's possible that a hazard will actually cause harm. The level of risk will depend on factors such as how often the job is done, the number of workers involved and how serious any injuries that result could be.</p> <p>A "risk" is the possibility that harm (death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard in your workplace.</p>
Risk Control	Taking action to eliminate health and safety risks so far as is reasonably practicable, and if that is not possible, minimising the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. Eliminating a hazard will also eliminate any risks associated with that hazard in your workplace.
Senior Leaders	This includes leaders within schools and department, and includes senior school managers, heads, deans and their deputies, program director, assistant directors, discipline heads, senior managers, professors and associate professors.
Third party	A supplier or service provider who is not directly employed or controlled by RMIT University.

6. Supporting Documents

Lists the supporting and related Processes and Guidance Material, Legislative references, Australian and International Standards etc. that may be useful references for process users

- HR - HSW-PR07 - Consultation & Communication
- HR - HSW-PR09 - HSW Risk Management
- HR - HSW-PR09-WI02 - HSW Risk Matrix v2.0
- HR - HSW-PR09-WI03 - HSW Risk Control
- HR - HSW-PR09-TM01 – HSW Risk Assessment Template
- HR - HSW-PR09-WI04 - SWMS Work Instruction
- HR - HSW-PR09-FR01 - SWMS Review Checklist
- HR - HSW-PR09-TM03 - Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) Form Template