**Warwick UCU Guide to Carrying out Risk Assessments for Departmental Reps**

Thank you so much for stepping up and helping to keep our campus safe by participating in the risk assessment process. Employers have a duty to consult with their employees on health and safety matters and this means that they must share risk assessments with union representatives  and must address employees' concerns. This is a very important process because it allows us to flag up and resolve potential hazards.

We know that many of you have not been trained and so may feel daunted by the task at hand, but don't worry. While you may not be an expert at risk assessments, you do know your workplace well and that's the most important thing. The rest of it is mostly common sense and thinking about how the building is used and how people move around in the space(s). And if you have any questions or concerns, we can help you out.

To get you started, we've put together this guide of resources to help you understand what a risk assessment is and things to look out for.

**What is a risk assessment?**

A risk assessment is really just the technical term to describe a document that both identifies potential health and safety hazards and outlines the ways that they will act to minimise risks to staff or anyone else on the site.

**How do I evaluate a risk assessment? What should I be looking for?**

Worksmart.org has put together a helpful guide that outlines how risk assessments should be developed. We'd suggest taking a quick look at this so that you can determine whether the risk assessment you're being asked to look over is effective:
**https://worksmart.org.uk/health-advice/health-and-safety/hazards-and-risks/what-are-five-steps-risk-assessment**

As you're reading over the risk assessment, consider the following:

- Risk assessments need to identify all potential hazards and risks within the workplace and they should consider all those who could be harmed by the hazards identified including employees, students, contractors, visitors, members of the public and so on. The risk assessment should capture what actually happens in practice and include any non-routine tasks that may be carried out specifically because of Covid-19. Think about what kinds of activities are carried out in the area and ask yourself: Has the risk assessment in front of you accurately described all the potential hazards or are there other hazards that need to be mentioned? Remember that it's not just physical health; stress and mental health are also hazards that the University is legally obligated to address.

[https://iosh.com/media/7811/iosh-risk-assessment-guide.pdf](https://iosh.com/media/7811/iosh-risk-assessment-guide.pdf) - This document (pages 2 & 3) gives lots of examples of questions and considerations that we need to be thinking about to ensure our workplaces will be safe for everyone.

- Risk assessments should specifically consider the risks to temporary workers, new or expectant mothers and young people. They should also  consider the unequal impact of Covid-19 and those who are at increased risk of contracting covid-19 and suffering poorer outcomes (i.e. underlying health conditions, older age, pregnancy, BAME groups, and men). Has this happened and if not, where could it happen?

- Risk assessments are as much about mitigating risks and hazards as they are about identifying them. Read through the proposed strategies for mitigation and ask yourself: Are the proposed strategies for minimising risk effective or could they be doing more? Do these strategies make you feel safer? And if not - what would be required to provide that confidence?

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us and email our Health & Safety officer, Claire Daffern at [c.daffern@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:c.daffern@warwick.ac.uk).

**General Advice**

- HSE on the law around risk assessments: [https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.pdf](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.pdf)

- UCU National's red lines and advice for negotiating a safe return to work: [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10960/HE-workplace-return-negotiating-guidance/pdf/ucu_covid-19_he-return-branch-advice2.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10960/HE-workplace-return-negotiating-guidance/pdf/ucu_covid-19_he-return-branch-advice2.pdf)

- UCU National's "Hazards and Controls." This is a document that is meant for Further Education, but much of it's advice around how to identify and mitigate for hazards is useful for risk assessments in HE as well [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10933/Covid-19-hazards-and-controls-in-FE/pdf/ucu_covid19_hazards1.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10933/Covid-19-hazards-and-controls-in-FE/pdf/ucu_covid19_hazards1.pdf)

- No return to campus until it's safe-Warwick UCU's red lines: [http://warwickucu.org.uk/no-return-to-campus-until-its-safe-warwick-ucus-five-red-lines/](http://warwickucu.org.uk/no-return-to-campus-until-its-safe-warwick-ucus-five-red-lines/)

- UCU webinar on health and safety: **need link**