

## **CONTROL OF NOISE AT WORK PROCEDURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure safe systems are devised and implemented to support the commitment made by the University to protect employees who are exposed to work related noise, so far as is reasonably practicable, from the risks associated with noise, and to meet the requirements of legislation.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 outline the legal requirements concerned with the protection of persons against risk arising from work-related exposure to noise and complements the general requirements to manage risks under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Deans of Schools / Directors / Heads of Department**

Responsible for all health and safety within their School or Department and therefore must:

- Ensure risk assessments are completed, including noise risk assessments
- Allocate sufficient resources for all control measures required by the risk assessment

#### **Supervisors, Line Managers, Directors of Studies and Academic Leads**

Responsible for ensuring the day to day supervision of health and safety matters in their areas of responsibility and therefore must:

- Carry out, or ensuring the carrying out, and monitor/review all applicable risk Assessments including the risk from noise
- Communicate the risk assessment to all affected parties
- Bring this procedure to the attention of direct reports working with equipment that produces high levels of noise
- As required, provide suitable and sufficient PPE to protect against noise

### **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Champion**

Act as the focal point for health, safety and wellbeing within their school or department and as such must:

- Bring any concerns reported to them, and related to noise, to the attention of the school or department Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee as appropriate. Any urgent concerns should be raised with the Dean of School / Head of Department immediately.

### **Individual Users**

(Staff and Students) have a responsibility for their own health and safety and that of others, and therefore must:

- Take care of themselves and others who could be affected by their actions and omissions
- Adhere to the control measures identified in Risk Assessments
- Report any significant safety issues to their Line Manager promptly

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Noise Risk Assessment**

Line Managers have a responsibility to carry out risk assessment for all staff under their remit.

Personal Tutors and Programme Leaders have responsibility for students whether within the University campuses or on any field or study trips.

Full training is available via the University Training Portal. We have a dedicated risk assessment course and also Health and Safety – Your Role as a Manager & Risk Assessment which incorporates how to complete a risk assessment.

For full details please see <https://connect.uws.ac.uk/training/SitePages/hss.aspx> or contact [HealthandSafety@uws.ac.uk](mailto:HealthandSafety@uws.ac.uk) for more information.

**Step 1:** Identify any areas, processes, machinery or equipment where noise generated could give rise to a risk to health, identify all persons likely to be exposed, and identify the length of time persons are exposed for. Data sheets supplied with equipment should be reviewed in order to provide noise data. Alternatively, a quick and easy method to identify if there is a potential noise problem is to check if you need to shout to be heard by someone standing 2m away.

**Step 2:** Seek advice from the Health & Safety team where a potential risk has been identified.

**Step 3:** Have a competent person carry out a risk assessment for any work activities that have been identified as likely to exceed the Lower Noise Exposure Action Value (80dBa / 135dB(A)).

**Step 4:** Provide technical and organisational measures to eliminate or reduce as far as is reasonably practicable the identified risks. This should include control of the noise at source, at the receiver and in transmission

**Step 5:** Classify places where noise exposure is likely to be above the Upper Exposure Action Value (85dBa / 137dB(A)) as Hearing Protection Zones, and mark the zones with appropriate signage

**Step 6:** Refer persons to UWS Occupational Health where exposure is significant, e.g. routinely exceeding 85dB(A) or where susceptible individuals may be exposed between the Lower and Upper Exposure Action Values

**Step 7:** Provide information, instruction, training and supervision

**Step 8:** Record and review the assessment

The Regulations refer to Exposure Action Values and Exposure Limit Values and the steps that need to be taken if the daily personal noise exposure is exceeded:

Lower Exposure Action Value (80dBa  $L_{EPD}$  / 135 dBa  $L_{CPeak}$ ):

- Employers must carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment
- Provide information and instruction to employees
- Make hearing protection available upon request

Upper Exposure Action Value (85dBa  $L_{EPD}$  / 137 dBa  $L_{CPeak}$ ):

- Reduce exposure to as low as reasonably practicable
- Designate Hearing Protection Zones
- Provide ear protection and ensure that it is worn
- Provide health surveillance

Exposure Limit Values (87dBa  $L_{EPD}$  / 140 dBa  $L_{CPeak}$ <sup>1</sup>):

- This limit must NOT be exceeded

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<sup>1</sup>  $L_{EPD}$  – Daily Personal Noise Exposure /  $L_{CPeak}$  – Peak Noise Exposure

## **Elimination or Control of Exposure to Noise**

**Control of Noise at the Source:** Where possible, hazardous levels of noise should be eliminated by removing the source. Where this is not reasonably practicable other options should be investigated, such as purchasing and using equipment that emits less noise, relocating the noise source, redesign of the noise source and regularly maintaining equipment.

**Control of Noise at the Receiver:** This could be achieved by limiting exposure time, defining Hearing Protection Zones.

**Attenuate Noise Transmission:** This could be achieved by using anti-vibration mounting, damping, acoustic barriers or acoustic enclosures

## **Ear Protection**

Depending on the noise exposure level there may be a legal requirement to provide ear protection, as outlined above. There are various options available, including ear plugs, ear defenders and specialised hearing protection.

Hearing protection must be compatible with other PPE and care should be taken to ensure that the hearing protection does not over-protect. Any defective hearing protection must be notified to the Line Manager, Technician or Personal Tutor. Reusable hearing protection should be inspected periodically and repaired / replaced as necessary.

Note that disposable ear plugs are often not inserted correctly and therefore there is a risk that the level of protection required will not be realised. This should be taken into account when selecting the most appropriate type of ear protection, as well as the level of instruction / training required for safe use. Always read and follow the manufacturer's instruction on the appropriate use and maintenance of PPE.

## **Hearing Protection Zones**

If there is an area where a person is likely to be exposed to noise at or above the upper action level, the area must be designated as a Hearing Protection Zone. This means that no persons should enter this zone unless necessary, that hearing protection is worn at all times within the zone, that adequate supervision is in place to ensure instructions are adhered to, and that adequate signage is located at the entrances and at appropriate locations within the zone. Contact the Health and Safety Team for further information and advice.

## Health Surveillance

On the completion of a suitable risk assessment and noise survey, health surveillance, in the form of audiometric testing (hearing tests) may be necessary for employees who are assessed to be regularly exposed above the upper exposure action values (without taking account of any reduction in noise exposure obtained through hearing protection), or are at risk for any reason, e.g. they already suffer from hearing loss or are particularly sensitive to damage.

Where any member of staff has been identified as being at risk, their line manager should notify UWS Occupational Health to allow them to be placed on an appropriate Health Surveillance programme. Full details of what is involved in the hearing test will be discussed with the employee at an appointment with Occupational Health. Information for employees attending Occupational Health for Health Surveillance can be found on the Occupational Health webpage accessed via People and Organisational Development (P&OD).

Further information, including easy to use noise calculator ready reckoners are also available on the HSE website: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/calculator.htm>

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