

Noise at Work Procedure

Document Control

Version	Date Document Reviewed	Publication on Web Site	Date of next Review	Summary of main changes
0.1	March 2016	April 2016	March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conversion from Policy to Procedure ○ Checked for legal compliance ○ Minor changes to update terminology or to reflect current practices
0.2	October 2017	October 2017	October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Checked for legal compliance ○ Reference to OH administrator removed
0.3	April 2019	April 2019	November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Checked for legal compliance
0.4	August 2021	August 2021	August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Checked for legal compliance ○ Section 4 updated to replace reference and links to the 'Buy quiet page' with 'How to choose quieter equipment and machinery'

Noise at Work Procedure

1 Introduction

This procedure forms part of the University's Health and Safety Management System and should be considered in relation to the University's Safety, Health and Wellbeing Policy to ensure that the risks associated with noise at work are appropriately assessed and managed to prevent damage to the hearing of staff and any others¹ that may be affected by University activities.

This procedure applies to all relevant Schools and Departments within the University and the aim is to outline the requirements of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations include the assessment of noise at work and protection from damage to hearing. However, it should be noted that there are other requirements laid down in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended) concerning the exposure of Young Persons (<18years) to noise. The advice and assistance of a specialist competent person will be required for this assessment process.

2 Accountabilities

A key role in implementing this procedure lies with the Executive members and all managers who must ensure the requirements in this procedure are addressed and implemented within their area of responsibility and control.

3. Procedure

Noise Exposure Limits and action values

The Regulations detail specific actions that must be taken at certain levels of exposure to noise. These are defined as Lower Exposure Action Levels, Upper Exposure Action Levels and Exposure Limit Values and are detailed below:

1) Lower exposure action values

- a daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80 dB (A-weighted); and
- a peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C-weighted)

(2) Upper exposure action values

- a daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85 dB (A-weighted); and
- a peak sound pressure of 137 dB (C-weighted)

(3) Exposure limit values

- a daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 87 dB (A-weighted); and
- a peak sound pressure of 140 dB (C-weighted)

¹ Others includes students, visitors and contractors where relevant

Where the exposure to noise varies significantly from day to day, then weekly personal noise exposure can be used in place of daily personal noise exposure.

Assessment of Exposure

Deciding if there is a problem with noise will depend on the noise level and how long people are exposed to it. Where a risk is identified, a risk assessment should be carried out to decide what action is needed and a plan of action developed.

The assessment should:

- identify where there may be a risk from noise and who is likely to be affected
- contain an estimate of the noise exposure level to staff. This can be done by observing work practices, referring to the probable noise levels of equipment in use and if necessary, measuring the noise level to determine whether staff are likely to be exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action value, an upper exposure action value or an exposure limit value.
- identify what needs to be done, for example, whether noise-control measures and/or personal hearing protection is required or work practices are safe; and
- identify staff that are at particular risk and/or require health surveillance

It may be necessary for a more detailed noise assessment to be completed and this should be done by a competent noise assessor that has the relevant skills, experience, knowledge and training (qualification recognised by the Institute of Acoustics). Where this is not available within the University, information on obtaining/selecting an Occupational Hygienist to conduct a noise assessment can be obtained from the University Health and Safety Advisor. Once the workplace noise assessment is completed, a report must be submitted to the relevant School/Department for action.

Based on the recommendations made by the assessment, a programme should be initiated to introduce engineering controls to reduce these noise levels to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

Elimination or Control of Exposure

An important measure in reducing workplace noise is by purchasing or hiring low-noise equipment and information can be obtained from the manufacturer or supplier about the likely noise levels for the conditions the equipment or machinery will operate in.

Where noise cannot be eliminated at source then it should be reduced to as low a level as is reasonably practicable and where possible, below the lower exposure action value.

Basic noise control measures can be effective in reducing the noise exposure of staff. Advice on a range of noise control measures and their application can be found in [Part 3 of the HSE Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations 2005](#).

Where staff are exposed to noise:

- at or above a lower exposure action value then they should be advised there may be risk to hearing and hearing protection made available should they want to wear it.
- at or above the Upper Exposure Action value, staff should be advised there is a risk to hearing and that the wearing of hearing protection is mandatory. This area should be demarcated as a hearing protection zone, identified as a hearing protection zone by the use of approved signage and access restricted where this is practical and the risk from exposure justifies it.
- above an Exposure Limit Value then the noise source must be stopped immediately and further advice should be taken to reduce this below the Exposure Limit Value.

Assessment Review and Records

The assessment should be reviewed in the event of any significant changes in the work to which the assessment relates or where there is reason to suspect that the assessment is no longer valid. Otherwise it should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Records of all assessment and subsequent reviews shall be made and stored in a retrievable format. Where a noise assessment is carried out, a record of the results and recommendations should be provided to the School/Directorate/ Department for action.

This record will be kept, until a subsequent assessment has been undertaken and should be archived in a retrievable format.

Maintenance and Use

How machinery is located, installed, maintained and operated can affect the noise levels produced. Schools/Departments should ensure advice and information is sought from the manufacturer and/or supplier.

All Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided by the University for the benefit of staff in compliance with these regulations shall be fully and properly used. Suitable and sufficient stocks of hearing protection should be maintained, provision should be made for the cleaning of hearing protection and periodic awareness programmes should be introduced to promote hearing protection (e.g., poster campaigns etc.)

Provision of Information, instruction and Training

Staff that are exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action value will be given information, instruction and training on the risk of hearing damage from exposure to high volume noise levels, how to minimise the risk, how to obtain hearing protection, how to report any shortcomings in the noise protection in place, their obligations under the Regulations and the purpose and result of any Health Surveillance Programme to which they are part.

Health Surveillance

Where the assessment shows that there is a risk to the hearing of a member of staff (generally when there are regular exposures above the *upper exposure action value*), regardless of hearing protection, then the individual will be subject to a Health Surveillance programme, undertaken by the Occupational Health (OH) Department.

This will also apply to any individual who is regularly exposed to levels above the *lower exposure action value*, and already has an existing hearing deficiency, or who has indicated a family history of early deafness.

Referral to Occupational Health for Health Surveillance (Hearing) should be made by completing and submitting the appropriate OH referral form. Following receipt, OH will arrange an appointment so that the appropriate testing can be carried out.

For any abnormal results or clinical symptoms, OH will arrange referral to the OH Physician or GP, in accordance with clinical indicators. If Health Surveillance indicates that a member of staff has suffered ill health as a result of exposure to noise then the individual will be provided with information and advised to talk to his own GP. A letter will be provided to his GP providing information and results of the Health Surveillance.

Following completion of a hearing test (audiometry), notification of results will be made to the referring manager and member of staff so that appropriate action can be taken. The recommendation provided by the doctor or audiometrist carrying out such Health Surveillance will be implemented fully.

Any member of staff will be allowed full access to their Health Surveillance Records.

4 Further Information

A copy of Controlling Noise at Work: Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations 2005 can be downloaded via the following link <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l108.htm>

The HSE provide information on how to choose quieter equipment and machinery and this can be found via the following link [HSE - Noise: How can I choose quieter equipment and machinery?](#)

Information on controlling noise relating to specific processes such as engineering, woodworking and construction can be found on the HSE website via the following link <http://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/index.htm>