**Provision and Use of Work Equipment Policy**

**(PUWER)**

**Synopsis**

This document sets out the University of Aberdeen Provision and Use of Work Equipment Safety Policy. This Policy applies to all employees of all Schools/Directorates. Parts also apply to students engaged in work activities at the University.

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**Approval**

**Approved by: SMT**

**Date: 15th August 2024**

Revision Record

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Date** | **Reason for Review** |
| Draft 1 | June 2024 | New document for consultation |
| Draft 1.1 | July 2024 | Woodworking Machinery content included (in section 4.2). |
| 1.0  | August 2024 | As agreed by SMT |

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1. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the Work Equipment Policy is to ensure that each and every employee of the University is made aware of their responsibilities under health and safety legislation, understand the role they have to play and is adequately informed and trained to carry out their role safely and without risk to their health or that of others affected by their actions. This is particularly applicable to how equipment for use at work is specified, procured, maintained and used.

1. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff regardless of the level of post the employee holds within which School or Directorate in the organisation. This includes temporary and agency staff and students carrying out work activities, such as research and demonstrations.

The policy does not apply to:

* [[1]](#footnote-1)Privately owned equipment, whether used by students or staff for their own study or other purposes. (Therefore, privately owned vehicles and laptops are not included, for example).
* Livestock.
* Substances (see Control of Substances Hazardous to Health requirements).
* Structures such as walls, floors, roofs, fences (See Construction and Design and Building Regulation requirements).

However, equipment provided by the University for students to use, e.g. in a lab or classroom, is included. This includes prototypes and one-off pieces of equipment for research purposes or internal use only.

The legislation does not apply outside the UK but the principles and standards of this should be followed as far as possible.

There are other specific circumstances in which the Provision and Use of Work Equipment regulations, and so this policy, may not apply, because other legislation takes precedence or may impose additional, or different requirements. If in doubt, contact your Local Safety Coordinator and/or the University Health and Safety Team.

Decommission and safe disposal of work equipment is also outside the scope of this policy.

There is a service level statement in place and a [Guide to Waste Disposal Services](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/Waste%20Services%20Guide%202023.pdf).

Advice on this, and disposal of items not normally covered by the service, is available from estates@abdn.ac.uk .

1. Definitions

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| **Term** | **Definition** |
| **Work equipment** | Almost any equipment used by a worker/employee at work including:* The simplest of hand tools - such as screwdrivers, knives, hand saws and meat cleavers.
* Electrical and electronic equipment - such as laptops/computers, printer/photocopiers (multi-function devices), mobile telephones, floor buffers, circular saws, drilling machines and anything with an electric motor (whether mains or battery powered).
* Laboratory equipment such as centrifuges, gas burners, soldering irons, lasers, test equipment, incubators, fume and biological safety cabinets etc.
* Machines for which the energy is from another source, e.g. a liquid fuel or compressed gas – such as mowing machines, tractors, dumper trucks, boilers, pressure systems and cylinders etc.
* Lifting equipment such as fork-lift trucks, elevating work platforms, vehicle hoists, stairlifts, goods lifts and shackles, slings and hooks.
* Other equipment which may not have any moving parts, such as ladders and furniture.
 |
| **Lifting Equipment** | Work equipment, for lifting or lowering loads, and include attachments used for supporting, anchoring, or fixing it. |
| **Lifting Operations** | Any operation concerned with lifting or lowering of a load. |
| **Load** | Any item being lifted or lowered including a person. |
| **Machine** | A device comprised of parts, at least one of which is move, driven by a power source. This may include those driven only by a human (e.g. a bicycle) but not simple hand tools. |
| **Mobile work equipment** | Any work equipment which carries out work while it is traveling, or which travels between different locations to carry out work. |
| **Prototype** | The first example of something, such as a machine or other product, from which later forms are developed, often for production and sale. |
| **Suitable for the intended use** | Safe for operation, maintained in a safe condition and examined/inspected as appropriate to ensure this remains the case. |
| **Use of work equipment** | Any activity involving work equipment – including starting, stopping, programming, setting, transporting, repairing, modifying, maintaining, servicing and cleaning. |
| **Woodworking Machinery** | Machinery used for working on wood, cork, fibreboard and materials composed mainly of these materials – Not hand tools |

1. Legislative Requirements

### 4.1 General Principles

These arrangements incorporate the following principles:

• Prior assessment of the equipment to be used, to evaluate the level of risks with the view of eliminating the risks, where possible.

• Satisfactory assessment, before work commences, of the recommended control measures which must be understood by the person who will carry out the task.

• Establishment of effective measures of control to ensure co-operation and co-ordination between those in control of the equipment in service and others, such as the users, likely to be affected by the activity.

• Provision of such information as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of all parties. All information must be available regarding their use, testing, emergency procedures in the case of an accident/incident and any other conditions necessary in relation to their safe use.

* Provision of training to ensure the competence of those operating the equipment and supervising others who use it.

### 4.2 Selection of Work Equipment

The selection of the right equipment for the work to be done is important as this often means planning ahead. You must think about how and where it will be used and who will be operating it. Other considerations must also include the suitability for the task, user, and/or environment and the guarantee that it is as safe as possible.

#### 4.2.1 Woodworking Machinery

There are various specific requirements with respect to both the design and the use of woodworking machinery (and specifically for machines with circular saw blades, wood planing machines and vertical spindle moulding machines). At the time of writing there was no such equipment required by the University as this work was contracted out.

Any employee intending to procure woodworking machinery for use within the University must contact the Health and Safety Team for advice before doing so.

No person under the age of 18 years shall operate any of the following:

* Circular Sawing Machines.
* Other machines fitted with circular saw blades.
* Wood Planing Machines.
* Vertical Spindle Moulding Machines.

Unless they have successfully completed, an approved course of training. Those working under the adequate supervision of a properly trained and experienced person, whilst undergoing training, would be exempt from this requirement.

Training shall also cover those assisting at the machines.

#### 4.2.2 Woodworking Machine Safety

* All woodworking machines should be fitted with a means of isolation from the electrical supply.
* The isolator should be conveniently positioned close to the machine.
* Lockable isolators give an increased degree of protection, particularly during maintenance operations.
* Lockable isolators can also be used to prevent unauthorised use of machines.
* Woodworking machines must also be provided with an efficient means of starting and stopping.
* Start and stop controls should be within easy reach of the operator in the normal operating position.
* Machines should be switched off when they are not in use and should not be left unattended until the cutter has stopped turning.

#### 4.2.3 Machine Braking

An automatic brake is an essential safety requirement of the *Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008*. These regulations require that the machinery must be equipped with an automatic brake that stops the tool in a sufficiently short time (defined as 10 seconds or less) if there is a risk of contact with the tool while it runs down.

#### 4.2.4 Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations

* Ensure all existing hazardous lifting equipment is subject to a risk assessment as appropriate with suitable and sufficient preventive and protective measures planned and implemented.
* Ensure all lifting equipment being purchased for the first time is subjected to a Risk Assessment prior to being purchased.
* Ensure all new activities, involving lifting equipment, are subjected to a risk assessment prior to the planned activity being undertaken, with suitable and sufficient preventive and protective measures designed in at the outset to eliminate or reduce so far as is reasonably practicable any hazards created.
* Implement the appropriate preventive risk control measures, including the provision of training, information, testing and maintenance and personal protective equipment necessary to reduce the risk to health and/or safety to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

The assessments should be reviewed as necessary to ensure they remain valid.

This is required to comply primarily with the *Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)* and applies to all existing and proposed on and off-site activities that involve the use of or exposure to lifting equipment and/or lifting operations.

Members of the public are required to be protected from exposure to specific work or activities related lifting equipment and/or lifting operations.

### 4.3 New Equipment

All new machinery should be:

* Be marked with a UKCA (UK Conformity Assessed) mark of conformity, which replaced the CE marking which applied before the UK left the EEC.
* Be provided with a Declaration of Conformity (ask for a copy).
* Safe – never rely on CE markings to guarantee machinery is safe. It is only a claim by the manufacturers that the equipment is safe. You **MUST** make your own safety checks.
* Be provided with instructions in English.

### 4.4 Hiring of Equipment

If equipment is rented, leased, hired of borrowed the person from which the equipment is hired is responsible for ensuring that it is safe and fit for use at the point of hire. They also have a responsibility to ensure that regular maintenance is carried out and recorded.

The hire company should also make reasonable attempts to find out what the equipment will be used for and provide advice on how it should be used and what precautions should be taken.

The safe use of the equipment is the responsibility of the person who hires it on behalf of the University.

### 4.5 Second Hand Equipment

Suppliers of second-hand equipment also have duties to ensure that such articles are safe as reasonably practicable when supplied. They should safeguard second hand machines or obtain a written undertaking from the purchaser that they will take specified steps to ensure that the article is safe.

If machinery has been refurbished to an extent that almost all replaceable parts are new, it would then be considered to be new machinery and so you would need to comply with the *Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008.* Purchasers of such second-hand equipment are responsible for ensuring that it complies with all the relevant recommendations. They should always undertake a risk assessment and act appropriately to reduce the risks.

4.6 Prototypes and one-off designs for internal use.

Prototypes of equipment are often produced to test a concept or process. By definition, prototypes are considered to be in an early stage of “manufacture”. Therefore, effectively, the University is the designer and manufacturer of these, prior to potentially putting them on the market, and so information on conformity with standards will not be available. Prototypes are also likely to be modified and developed prior to becoming the final version, which may or may not then be sold.

A similar situation applies if equipment is built or adapted from existing equipment which is only used internally and not intended to be sold or provided to others. In both circumstances the requirements in section 4.7 below will apply.

 The general principles of this policy should be applied as far as possible. Therefore, building, work on, testing and use of the prototype must be risk assessed, only competent people should be allowed to carry out these activities (or under the close supervision of others who are competent) and control measures put in place to mitigate risks as far as reasonably practicable.

If a prototype is to be displayed or demonstrated at events, trade fairs or exhibitions in the UK, this must only be done under controlled conditions.

This means the product needs to be operated by experts on the equipment, there must be restricted public contact with the product, the product must not interact inappropriately with other neighbouring products, and it must be clearly indicated on a sign that the product does not meet the legal requirements for sale and will not be made available until it does.

However, fully manufactured products intended for consumer testing need to meet the UK requirements as they apply in UK at the time the consumer testing takes place.

No prototype must be sold, or otherwise provided to another organisation, unless and until it meets the standards the University is entitled to expect from other manufacturers and suppliers.

If in doubt please contact the Health and Safety Team for advice.

4.7 Risks (including repairs, modifications and maintenance)

Where the use of work equipment is likely to involve a specific risk to health and safety, every employer shall ensure that:

* The use of that work equipment is restricted to those persons given the task of using it, and
* Repairs, modifications, maintenance or servicing of that work equipment is restricted to those persons who have been specifically trained to perform operations of that description (whether or not also authorised to perform other operations).
* Persons designated to operate equipment receive adequate instruction, information and training.
* Wherever possible risks are always controlled:
	+ by elimination.
	+ physical measures (provision of guards, stop controls, protection devices etc).
	+ safe systems of work.
	+ Permit-to-work.
* SuitablePersonal Protective Equipment is provided if required (this should only be as a last resort after considering other control measures) to include special tools, protective clothing and gas detection devices and such equipment is maintained in good condition.

4.8 Inspections and Record Keeping

A record of all appropriate risk assessments undertaken, along with any revision and associated documentation must be retained.

Copies of all risk assessments produced by external agents, contractors and employers operating on University premises or engaged in or affected by any activities will be held by the relevant School / Directorate.

A record of all documentation detailing the lifting equipment conformity with any relevant standard, maintenance requirements etc will be held by the relevant School / Directorate.

A record of all examination, inspection, testing and maintenance undertaken on an item of work equipment will be retained by the relevant team/ premises.

See the University Records Retention Schedule and Guidance on the Retention of Health and Safety Documents for further information.

### 4.9 Training, Information and Instruction

The University must ensure that all persons who use work equipment have received adequate training, including training in the methods which may be adopted when using work equipment, this also includes employees who supervise or manage the use of work equipment (including by students).

Training also needs to be provided for people who are on the premises with the employer’s permission or by invitation, and use university owned or supplied equipment (e.g. contractors, agency staff, suppliers and partner organisations).

### 4.10 Young Persons

Young people are particularly vulnerable due to the immaturity and unfamiliarity with the working environment. The University must provide training and supervision to ensure that various levels of competence for safety and statements of competence should be developed.

They should not be allowed to operate any machinery unless they have been trained and are supervised.

Note: In some cases it is not legally allowed for a person below 18 years old, for example, to operate some types of machinery.

1. Responsibilities

### 5.1 University Court

The University Court has ultimate responsibility for overseeing health, safety and wellbeing matters at the University. As such, they should seek assurance that appropriate risk control measures are in place and acted upon in relation to activities across the University that could give rise to significant risk. They should be aware of significant health and safety risks across the University.

### 5.2 Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team (SMT) has delegated authority from the University Court and as such, should seek reassurance that appropriate risk control measures are in place, are being implemented and that those with risk management and assessment responsibilities are trained and competent.

### 5.3 Estates and Facilities

Estates and Facilities are responsible for ensuring buildings are safe, including the work equipment fixed to buildings, such as electrical installations and heating systems.

5.4 Digital and Information Services

Digital and Information Services are responsible for the provision of University owned personal computers (PCs) and laptops, under warranty for devices connected to the University network, and defined equipment in data centres\*.

\*Note: The data centres are shared environments. The University of Aberdeen owns the Edward Wright Data Centre, but this is a shared space in which there is hardware hosted for other organisations and the University has equipment in data centres owned by others.

### 5.5 Heads of School and Directors

It is the responsibility of each Head of School and Director to ensure that:

* This policy is brought to the attention of all staff to whom it may apply.
* All equipment/activities which may create a risk with respect to equipment related work are risk assessed.
* Appropriate controls are put in place were a significant risk is identified.

• Personnel who perform testing and maintenance are competent University employees or external contractors.

• Members of staff are familiar with the hazards of the work equipment they use and understand basic safety precautions.

### 5.6 Line Managers and Supervisors

Line managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that they:

* Do not allow any new equipment to be used until it is fully commissioned if new, the relevant risk assessment has been completed, information, instruction and training have been provided to its operator.
* Obtain all relevant information from suppliers in the use and maintenance of equipment, including second-hand equipment.
* Ensure that members of their staff who use equipment have been provided with adequate information, instruction and training.
* Ensure that any equipment used by a member of their staff has been risk assessed.
* Ensure that where members of their staff use equipment that the findings of the relevant risk assessment have been implemented.
* Identify any special measure required for vulnerable individuals – including young workers (16 -18 years old), new recruits, and prohibitions on young workers, for example on using dangerous equipment, should be clearly specified.

### 5.7 Employees, Students and Visitors

Employees must co-operate with their employer to ensure these arrangements are complied with, to ensure the safety of themselves and anyone else who may be affected.

Non-employees, such as students, residents and other visitors also have a common law duty of care to others.

1. References

## 6.1 Internal References

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University Policy specific to the type of equipment concerned (electrical, gas, display screen equipment etc.) and any School, Directorate or other local policy or guidance which may contain specific requirements in addition to the general requirements described here.

Note: Some existing equipment may also have asbestos containing materials in them, which should also be checked if suspected or any activity may expose a user to the risk to health from these materials.

For information on retention of records see the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Document Number or reference** | **Document Name** |
| [Records Management](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/university-records-management-280.php#panel6473) | The University Records Retention Schedule |
| HS-GN-015 | Guidance on the Retention of Health and Safety Documents |

## 6.2 External References

Given the wide scope of this policy it is impractical to provide guidance on every type of equipment to which it may apply. Where advice is required on specific types of equipment, please consult your Local Safety Co-ordinator and/or the Health and Safety Team.

The following are also available as authoritative sources of information.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source Organisation** | **Document Name** |
| [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1998/2306/contents/made) | Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. |
| [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm) | Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L22). |
| [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1998/2307/contents) | Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. |
| [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l113.htm) | Safe use of lifting equipment – Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L113). |
| [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l114.pdf) | Safe Use of woodworking machinery Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L114). |
| [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2008/1597/contents) | The Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008 (as amended). |
| [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg271.pdf) | Buying New Machinery (INDG 271) |

1. See Electrical safety Policy section for Electrical Equipment not owned by the University. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)