

Key Risk Area (KRA)

KRA 2.1 Manual Handling and Ergonomics

1. Purpose

This document provides guidance to eliminate or minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of musculoskeletal disorders arising from manual handling and ergonomic hazards.

2. Scope

This Guideline applies to all health, safety and wellbeing activities of staff, students, visitors (including volunteers and contractors), Council members, and other persons interacting with the University of Newcastle (workers); the operations of staff of University aligned Research Centres and controlled entities; and all activities conducted by or on behalf of the University of Newcastle on and outside of the University's campuses.

3. Guidelines

3.1. Risk Management

Workers involved in engineering design projects, modification of existing equipment, purchase/installation of new equipment, maintenance and job planning will adopt the manual handling and ergonomic hierarchy of controls to eliminate or minimise risk so far as is reasonably practicable, and comply with all applicable legislative requirements, relevant Australian Standards and guidelines.

Risk assessments will be conducted for all identified manual handling and ergonomic hazards. These will be completed prior to commencing new tasks, and will be reviewed when conditions or the task changes. The general [Health and Safety Risk Assessment Form](#) should be used to assess all manual handling and ergonomic hazards in accordance with the Guideline [HSG 3.1 Health and Safety Risk Management](#).

In addition, health and safety risk assessment forms or checklists have been developed for particular hazard categories to assist in identifying specific hazards and risk controls. The Ergonomics and Manual Handling Checklist **(pending)** (CHK-EL03.07) must also be utilised

when assessing the manual handling and ergonomic risks to workers associated with new or existing activities. In completing the risk assessment and checklist, the following manual handling and ergonomic hazard considerations must include:

- Working posture and position;
- Movements required to undertake the task;
- Forces and vibrations relating to the task;
- Workplace and workstation design, layout and condition;
- Duration and frequency of the task;
- Weight and force applied;
- Characteristics of the load or object or persons involved in the task (including nature, size, weight and number);
- Skills and experience;
- Age and fitness;
- Work organisation and systems, e.g. the availability of people;
- Conditions of the workplace and environmental factors.

Manual handling and ergonomic risk control measures will be selected with reference to the hierarchy of controls in order as below:

- Ergonomic and manual handling risks will be eliminated so far as is reasonably practicable e.g. use of cranes or hoists to lift a load.
- If a risk cannot be eliminated, the control measures in the hierarchy of controls will need to be considered;
- Substituting the equipment used for the task with something of lesser risk;
- Isolating any manual handling hazards, for example by separating vibrating machinery from the user;
- Modification of the object to be handled;
- Redesign of the workplace layout;
- Redesign of materials flow;
- Reduction of body stressing actions such as bending, twisting, reaching, lifting, carrying;
- Providing mechanical assistance for the task e.g. trolleys, pallet jacks;
- Specific training or procedures for heavy tasks if other methods of control are not possible e.g. team lifting;
- Providing PPE such as shock-absorbent shoes.

Musculoskeletal disorders arising from manual handling tasks will be appropriately investigated with a view to identifying root causes and implementing control measures to eliminate or minimise future or ongoing risks associated with the hazard, so far as is reasonably practicable.

3.2. Workstation and Working from Home Ergonomics

Setting up a workstation correctly can significantly reduce the risk of muscle strain or overuse injuries. Most injuries are caused by equipment being maladjusted or tasks being performed incorrectly over a long period. Small changes such as adjusting the height of the chair, or the distance of the monitor can make a significant difference.

The [Workstation Ergonomics online module](#) and quiz in Discover should be completed as a first step. The [Workstation Set Up Self-Assessment Checklist](#) should also be utilised to review the workstation at the office or home environment. If problems persist, or issues are identified, a consultation with the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team can be arranged to determine what can be improved, or recommend customised equipment such as an ergonomic keyboard or mouse, footrest or telephone headset.

It is important that the work environment when working away from the office is reviewed against the checklist criteria and set up to work. Further information is available from the [Working From Home](#) SharePoint page.

3.3. Awareness and Training

Workers and visitors will receive relevant information about manual handling and ergonomic hazards during their induction.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are an essential part of a safe systems of work and are an important part of an overall health and safety management system and framework, and are fundamental in the training and orientation of new staff and students in manual handling and ergonomic hazards of the specific process or activity. Standard Operating Procedures are also a valuable tool in assessing the level of understanding or competency regarding on-the-job training. For further details on the development of a SOP and appropriate competency assessment, refer to Guideline [HSG 4.2 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Induction, Training and Competency](#) and [KRA 1.12 Standard Operating Procedures](#).

Employees can access general training in ergonomics and manual handling via [Discover](#).

Training will include:

- Information on work related musculoskeletal disorders and injury;
- Risk factors that cause or contribute to manual handling hazards;
- Recognising and early reporting of muscular disorder symptoms; and
- Prevention and control measures.

4. Definitions

In the context of the Health and Safety Management System Framework:

Employer	Means the University of Newcastle (the University).
Ergonomics	The scientific discipline concerned with understanding the interaction between people and their environment. At a workplace level, it includes the process of designing and arranging workplaces, products and processes in order to optimise well-being.
Executive Committee	Consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Pro Vice-Chancellors, the Chief Operating Officer, Chief People and Culture Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, the University Secretary and the President of Academic Senate.
Hazard	A situation, condition, or event, including a person's behaviour, that exposes a worker to a risk to their health or safety during the course of work in a workplace, that has the potential to cause injury, illness or even death or to damage buildings, plant or equipment.
Hierarchy of Controls	Rank of control measures that a duty holder must work through when managing risks, if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk altogether. This hierarchy ranks control measures from the highest level of protection and reliability (other than elimination) to the lowest.
Manual Handling	Any task requiring a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing.
Musculoskeletal disorders	Injuries to, or diseases of, the musculoskeletal system that can occur suddenly or over time, other than injuries caused by crushing, entrapment or cutting resulting from the mechanical operation of plant
Leader / Supervisor	Any member of the University who is responsible for supervising staff and/or undergraduate or postgraduate students and/or for leading research projects.
Risk	The likelihood that a hazard will cause harm and the consequence of that harm.
Risk Control	The process of evaluating the probability and consequences of injury or illness arising from exposure to identified hazards associated with manual handling.
Worker	Includes an employee, conjoint, student on work experience, contractor, sub-contractor, and volunteer. A person is a worker if the person carries out

	<p>work in any capacity for the University or another person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) an employee, or (b) a contractor or subcontractor, or (c) an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, or (d) an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking, or (e) an outworker, or (f) an apprentice or trainee, or (g) a student gaining work experience, or (h) a volunteer, or (i) a person of a prescribed class.
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5. Responsibilities

A comprehensive list of health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities is provided in [HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities Guideline](#).

Specific responsibilities under this Guideline include:

Leaders and Supervisors

- Ensure a risk assessment is conducted to identify possible hazards and risks associated with manual handling and repetitive tasks;
- Ensure Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are developed;
- Ensure hazards and injuries are reported via University reporting systems and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team are notified if a Worker reports a musculoskeletal disorder arising from a manual handling task; and
- Ensure that training and instruction is provided for manual handling and repetitive tasks so that Workers understand the control measures and SOPs that must be utilised.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team

- Provide assistance and information to Leaders/Supervisors;
- Provide input to risk assessments and the selection of control measures when required, and the development of appropriate SOPs;
- Assist with the development and delivery of training and instruction material when required; and
- Assist with communicating the requirements for manual handling tasks and ergonomics.

Workers

- Implement and adhere to manual handling and ergonomic guidelines;
- Ensure the SOPs for the work are followed;

- Report to their Leader/Supervisor if experiencing musculoskeletal disorders arising from manual handling tasks;
- Report hazards via the online Incident Reporting System and put controls in place where possible;
- Report the onset of musculoskeletal disorder symptoms and injuries arising from manual handling tasks as soon as practicable;
- Undertake training via Discover when directed; and
- Maintain regular contact with the designated contact person following injury when this is a requirement.

6. References & Related Documents

The following documentation is referenced in, or applicable to this Guideline:

[HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[HSG 3.1 Health and Safety Risk Management](#)

[HSG 4.2 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Induction, Training and Competency](#)

[KRA 1.12 Standard Operating Procedures](#)

[Code of Practice - Hazardous Manual Tasks – August 2019](#)

7. Amendment History

Version	Date of Issue	Approval	Section(s) Modified	Details of Amendment
1	June 2015	Director, People and Workforce Strategy	-	Original version as Guideline
2	October 2023	CPCO	All	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All sections reviewed for legal compliance 2. Updated content in all sections 3. Added new/renamed Related Documents 4. Added Amendment History 5. Amended document control header and footer

8. Appendices

Nil