

## Key Risk Area (KRA)

### KRA 1.12 Standard Operating Procedures

#### 1. Purpose

This document provides guidance for preparation of a document that describes a method for performing a specific job or task with the appropriate application of risk controls to prevent injury or illness to a person.

#### 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. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) considerations

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) at the University of Newcastle in relation to health and safety, is a document outlining the steps required to carry out a particular task safely and without harm to health. It identifies the work tasks in a logical sequence and the relevant health and safety risk controls required to eliminate or minimise the risks of the identified hazards. The training and experience required to carry out the work task in accordance with the SOP are also included.

In addition to managing safety, the use of SOP's leads to tasks being undertaken in a uniform manner enhancing quality assurance, ensuring compliance and providing reproducible outcomes which are extremely important in a teaching and research setting.

SOP's must consider hazard exposure, frequency of exposure, and worker knowledge and experience. A higher priority must be placed on tasks performed by students and other inexperienced workers.

SOPs must also be written with consideration of the audience (students, research associates) and experience in the tasks.

SOP's must also consider:

- it is based on procedures that have previously been trialled. If trialling a new procedure, the procedure can be outlined in an application. Once tried and tested, an SOP can be created;
- if the procedure is only going to be used under one project (one-off) and not into the future, an SOP is not required; the procedure can be outlined within the application
- ensure procedures outlined are current best practice. If best practice advice changes in the future, relevant SOPs must be updated
- the SOP should only cover one procedure
- should cover procedures that involve the interaction with animals for scientific purposes (research
- and/or teaching)
- ensure the information provided is specific, i.e. the UniSQ AEC cannot approve SOPs that contain broad or vague details
- write clearly and concisely, i.e. a set of instructions that can be easily followed by another researcher without any issues – ask another to read through the SOP
- ensure consistency in terminology
- write in the third person
- ensure appropriate risk management plans have been submitted and approved
- if the procedure involves the collection and/or use of animal biospecimens (including cadavers) a
- Biological Safety application may be required. Consult Biosafety Central for further advice.
- seek expert advice where required
- refer to supporting literature
- use photographs and diagrams to support the written content, where necessary
- include relevant references. Where possible, references should be from peer-reviewed journals/articles
- if an adverse event occurs relating to an SOP an adverse event must be submitted.

### **3.2. Development of a SOP**

Development of a new SOP starts by completing a risk assessment for the task following the procedures in [HSG 3.1 Health and Safety Risk Management](#). Workers who are familiar with the work task should be involved with the activity and prepared by a person with sound, practical experience with knowledge of the activity, in consultation with workers that

complete the activities, and involve a review of manufacturer or supplier's manual. Review of associated legislative requirements and University guidelines must occur as well as regulatory requirements and other relevant documents such as Australian Standards when drafting the SOP.

All hazards of each step of the work/task should be considered during the risk assessment including those that may be less obvious e.g. exposure to dust, noise, heat, chemicals and awkward or repetitive movements that could result in injury, and what is needed to be done or available before the task is carried out. This may include the issuing of permits or carrying out isolations; any pre-requisite training, licence or skills; availability of equipment; and the use of personal protective equipment.

The SOP must utilise straightforward language and labelled pictures/diagrams to suggest practical ways of controlling the (key) hazards or significant tasks. When considering the risk controls for each hazard refer to the hierarchy of controls. In some circumstances a combination of control measures may need to be used. Refer to [HSG 3.1 Health and Safety Risk Management](#) for more information on the hierarchy of controls. The SOP steps and efficiency of controls must be verified through consultation.

If equipment used for the task requires calibration and/or maintenance these activities should be included in the SOP. General waste disposal and general housekeeping requirements should also be included.

The SOP should include these document control details:

- the School/Division Unit name and location;
- the work/task that the SOP refers to;
- the title of the SOP;
- document revision history
- the date of preparation;
- due date for review;
- version number;
- names of the authors of the SOP; and
- sign off by a responsible person to verify that the SOP is fit for purpose e.g. supervisor, laboratory or workshop manager, research academic. Sign off can be by personal signature, electronic signature or typed name.

### 3.3. Consultation and review

When an SOP has been drafted it should be circulated to the workers who will be required to follow its requirements to seek their feedback and to request suggestions for improvements which will ensure their engagement in the process.

SOP's 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 the 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. Once completed, the SOP will be readily available in the work location for workers to follow when undertaking the task described and can be used to train all workers and students to ensure they understand the risk controls that must be followed when carrying out the task. The signature of the participants will provide a record that they have undertaken the training. For further details refer to Guideline [HSG 4.2 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Induction, Training and Competency](#).

Standard Operating Procedures must be reviewed:

- whenever the task or activity changes;
- when a new hazard is identified or becomes known: for example, new information in a Safety Data Sheet;
- when equipment or processes are not used for a period of time (over 6 months) and worker knowledge and experience may decline;
- after an associated injury, near miss or illness, or
- every two years.

## 4. Definitions

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

Employer	Means the University of Newcastle (the University).
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.
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.
Plant and equipment	Includes any machinery, equipment (including scaffolding), appliance, implement or tool and any component or fitting thereof or accessory thereof.
Risk	The likelihood that a hazard will cause harm and the consequence of that harm.
Worker	Includes an employee, conjoint, student on work experience, contractor, sub-contractor, and volunteer. A person is a worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for the University or another person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as: (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.

## 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 that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are developed for routine tasks or jobs.
- Provide instruction and training to workers and students to ensure they understand how to develop and follow the SOPs relevant to their work.
- Ensure SOPs are documented and are readily available in the workplace close to where they apply. SOPs can be available in hard or soft copy.
- Monitor compliance with SOPs and where non-compliance is noted, identify the cause and arrange corrective actions which may include making amendments to the SOP when indicated.

### Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team

- Arrange instruction and training in risk assessment and preparation of SOPs; and

- Assist with the development of SOPs for routine tasks where advice is needed.

### Workers

- Participate in conducting risk assessments and preparation of SOPs where required;
- Comply with the requirements of all SOPs applicable to their work.
- Report problems with compliance with current SOPs and make recommendations for amendments where indicated.
- Report changes to work situations that indicate where additional SOPs may be required.
- Report any health and safety or compliance issues to the Leader / Supervisor in addition to lodging a report in the online Incident Hazard Reporting System (AIMS).

## 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](#)

## 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	1. Changed from Guideline to KRA 1.12. 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