

## **Guidelines on risk assessment in relation to safeguarding vulnerable groups**

Before embarking on any University activity that may involve staff or students (whether acting in a paid or unpaid capacity) working with members of a vulnerable group, it is advisable for a risk assessment to be conducted, part of which should cover safeguarding issues. The member of staff responsible for the activity should undertake the risk assessment which, as well as identifying risks to be mitigated or removed, also provides an opportunity to consider and identify alternative working practices. There are no fixed rules on how a risk assessment should be carried out, although the following general principles should apply:

### **a. Incorporate the standard health and safety risk assessment**

The Health and Safety Office has developed a code of practice on risk assessment which is available at:

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/safety/media/po/racop-po.pdf>

A standard risk assessment template is included as Annex A, which you may adapt or modify to meet your requirements. A risk assessment is a careful examination of what, in your area of work, could cause harm to people so that you can assess whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. Where appropriate, this process should include consideration of any risks that may occur involving vulnerable groups, both within the University and in settings outside the University, such as placements, field trips, summer schools, or open days where members of a vulnerable group are in our care.

By way of example, the Health and Safety Office has developed a risk assessment checklist in relation to the admission of under-18s which is included as part of this guidance as annex B.

### **b. Identify the nature, length, frequency, intensity and time of any contact with vulnerable groups**

This is designed to help you identify the context within which the risks should be managed, in the areas of teaching or research, or student recruitment/widening participation activity. Identifying the different types of contact that staff or students may have with these groups should lead to consideration of where you might seek to minimise occasions where a single adult is in the company of a lone child, or adult in a vulnerable situation and where there is little or no possibility of the activity being supervised or observed by others. For this purpose, the terms 'frequently' and 'intensively' relate to the person doing the activity, not whether it is always with the same child or adult in a vulnerable situation.

### **c. Identify any potential risk areas and detail action to prevent the risk occurring**

Once you have identified the risks you should consider how they might be mitigated or removed. For example, situations where there is only one member of staff or one student present with a lone child or adult in a

vulnerable situation should be avoided where practicable. This part of the process may involve consideration of alternative working practice. For example, on occasions when a confidential interview or one to one meeting is necessary, it should be conducted in a room where the exit is clearly visible and, where possible, the door to the room is left open. Meetings with any student or employee under the age of 18 outside the normal teaching or working environment of the University should be avoided. Where such meetings cannot be avoided, another staff member should be informed that they are taking place and wherever possible ensure that more than one adult is present<sup>1</sup>.

**d. Identify any situations where a Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) check might be required.**

This would apply to staff or students where their normal duties fall within the definition of Regulated Activity or are listed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order 1975 or the Police Act Regulations. The definition of “normal” in this instance is in accordance with the standard dictionary definition (or variations thereof), which is “usual, regular or typical”. Therefore positions that have incidental/irregular contact with children or scenarios where an individual has incidental or indirect contact not related to a position of employment do not give rise to eligibility for DBS checks.

Decisions in relation to who should be subject to a DBS disclosure should be undertaken as part of the risk assessment process, taking into account the exact nature of the employee’s duties, where they work and the degree of contact that they have with any persons (including students) under the age of eighteen years or any adults in a vulnerable situation. In relation to students, and depending on numbers, it is advisable to allocate all under-18s within your department to the same Personal Tutor to minimise the volume of DBS checks that may be required.

Additional guidance on DBS checks can be accessed at:  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/hr/resourcing/additionalguidance/crb/>

If you have any queries relating to DBS checks for staff, please contact the Resourcing Manager, Human Resources by email at [recruit-queries@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:recruit-queries@bristol.ac.uk)

**f. Record your findings**

You should keep a copy of the risk assessment form on file for future reference or use and provide a copy to your Head of School or line manager. It is good practice to review your assessment from time to time - annually is a good guide. You should initial and date the assessment when you review it.

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<sup>1</sup> An exception to this would be any activity, such as mentoring or outreach work in schools, where this type of contact cannot be avoided. In such cases, it is anticipated that any individual engaging in such activity would be subjected to the usual DBS checks, in accordance with the University’s safeguarding policy, and would abide by any safeguarding policy or procedure that was established in the environment where this activity takes place.

## ANNEX A

### RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

<b>Department:</b>
<b>Activity:</b>
<b>Risks:</b>
<b>Precautions:</b>
<b>Emergency Procedures:</b>
<b>Training Required:</b>
<b>Access Restrictions:</b>
<b>Assessment undertaken by:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

## ANNEX B

 <b>University of BRISTOL</b>		<b>Admission of Young Persons: Risk Assessment Checklist</b>	
<b>Description and location of Hazard</b>	<b>Who might be harmed</b>	<b>What is the risk?</b>	<b>Comments/Actions</b>
Psychological capacity	Young persons	There will be large individual differences in the psychological capacity of young persons based on differences in experience, skills, personality and attitudes. Lack of awareness might lead to an increase chance of an accident and supervisors must be aware of this.	Risk assessments and control measures adopted must concentrate on the areas of work that could be beyond a young person's emotional coping ability.
Physical capacity	Young persons	Young persons may not be physically capable of some manual handling activities, training and supervision must be provided.	Complete a risk assessment in compliance with the manual handling Regulations. Further details is contained in the University Code of Practice.
Ionising radiation	Young persons	The risk of developing cancer and hereditary defects from exposure to ionising radiation, which increases slightly for young people is controlled by setting statutory dose limits.	Design work procedures to keep exposure as low as reasonably practicable.
Biological agents	Young persons	Young persons are no more likely to contract infections from biological agents than adults. They may be at greater risk if they suffer from other disease or from the effects of medication or pregnancy.	Complete a risk assessment in line with COSHH requirements; identify measures to control any risks.
Toxic, harmful, corrosive and irritant substances	Young persons	Young persons are not physiologically at any greater risk. The actual risk can only be determined through a risk assessment of the particular	Complete a risk assessment in line with COSHH requirements; identify measures to control any risks.

		substances used.	
Electrical hazards	Young persons	The risk is one of electric shock, burns or electrocution. Young people do not face greater physical risks from electricity than others.	Young persons must not carry out any work involving electricity unless they have enough technical knowledge and experience to prevent injury and are under the appropriate supervision.
Working with animals	Young persons	Young persons may be more at risk because of their inexperience and lack of appreciation of the risks.	Safety management systems must be put in place to prevent access to potentially aggressive animals, provide proper training, adequate handling facilities available and proper supervision. Risk assessments must be completed or revised to take into account lack of experience and immaturity.
Noise	Young persons	There is no evidence that young persons face greater risk of damaged hearing from noise exposure than others.	Ensure compliance with the Noise at Work Regulations 2005.