



## St Peter's College

### RISK ASSESSMENTS

#### Introduction

Risk assessment is a valuable tool in planning work, developing procedures, informing and training staff, and reducing the number of accidents in the workplace. It is a statutory requirement and failure to comply leaves the College vulnerable to enforcement action by various agencies, with obvious deleterious costs to the College in terms of its reputation, business and research continuity.

This policy reiterates the legal context of risk assessment and sets out to clarify the process for those required to undertake them.

#### Definitions

Hazard and risk are defined as follows:

**Hazard** is any source of potential damage, harm, or any adverse condition that can affect someone at work. It is the inherent property of a thing, situation, process or activity to cause harm.

**Risk** is the probability that a person at work will come to harm as a result of exposure to the hazard. It is, therefore, the chance that the harm will actually be realised in the circumstances prevalent at the time.

#### Legal Considerations

The requirement for a general assessment of risk, amongst other things, is established in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR) 1999. There are also specific requirements for risk assessment in other regulations placing additional duties on the employer. Particular examples include noise, working at height, manual handling and computer use.

#### The Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a thorough way of looking at work activities to identify those things, situations, tasks or processes that might cause harm to people. Once risks have been identified, the assessor, usually and individual supervisor, manager or person in control of an area of work, should determine the measures required to prevent harm occurring.

The assessor must be a competent person ie with the appropriate expertise or knowledge to be able to make informed judgments about the risks associated with a situation or activity. Where there are gaps in that individual's knowledge or they feel they are not competent to assess the risks, help must be sought through the Bursar's office.

The risk assessment should be done in advance of any new work commencing, since the specific requirements of other legislation may also impose certain conditions or dictate when additional precautions should be put in place.

## The HSE<sup>1</sup>'s 5-steps to risk assessment

In brief, these are as follows:

- Step 1 – identify the hazards. All aspects of the work must be considered under all possible conditions using observation, information sources, suppliers' information, accident records and previous experience. Non-routine aspects of the activity eg maintenance must also be considered.
- Step 2 – identify the persons or groups who may be harmed and how. Consider everyone who might be affected – workers, colleagues, external visitors, contractors, members of the public etc. Vulnerable individuals must also be considered eg those with disabilities, lack of experience in the workplace etc.
- Step 3 – evaluate the risks and decide on precautions. The most common way of evaluating risk is to rate it as high, medium or low according to the potential outcomes. For example:
  - (i) potential severity of the harm (e.g. severe, moderate, insignificant).
  - (ii) likelihood that the harm will arise (e.g. very likely, possible, unlikely).
  - (iii) numbers of people likely to be affected (e.g. many, some, very few).

A simple evaluation matrix can be found at Annex A to this document. There is no single way of determining the degree of risk presented by various hazards and that for most general assessments a sound knowledge of the situation, tasks or activities and objective, informed judgement will be adequate.

- Step 4 – record findings and implement them. Significant findings of a risk assessment are to be recorded in writing and stored either in hard copy or electronically. A simple tabulated format for a risk assessment is at Annex B to this document. An assessment is deemed to be “suitable and sufficient when it can be demonstrated that:
  - (i) Adequate checks were made and that all groups affected by the work or activity have been properly considered
  - (ii) Significant risks have been identified and appropriate action taken to eliminate or reduce them. If the actions are not followed through then the assessment is worthless
  - (iii) Reasonable precautions were put in place. Some actions may take time to implement so consideration should be given to interim measures or, in extreme circumstances, stopping the activity until appropriate measures can be put in place.
  - (iv) Appropriate information, instruction, and training has been given to those directly involved with the work
  - (v) Residual risks were low.
- Step 5 – monitor and review. The risk assessment process is a dynamic one and subject to feedback to ensure measures are working or to improve on those put in place.

Annexes:

- A. Simple risk matrix.
- B. Risk Assessment table.

---

<sup>1</sup> Health & Safety Executive