Brunel University London Health and Safety In Research Policy
Policy ✓ Code of Practice… Guidance… Procedure…
Organisation-wide ✓ Local…
Approved by the University Health & Safety Committee
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The purpose of presenting this document to the University Health & Safety Committee Standard 3 year review ✓ Changes in practice and/or legislation… New policy document…

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1. Purpose

Sensible management systems, together with suitable practical training for those involved, are essential to providing a framework in which people can work safely. This policy is based on the higher education sector guidance; Responsible Research, which was launched in October 2012 as a model of best practice.

It describes how research is about investigating new avenues of knowledge, and this carries an unavoidable element of the unknown. The outcome of research work can be uncertain or can differ from what was originally predicted. Despite the inherent elements of uncertainty, it is possible for research workers to innovate without exposing themselves or others to unnecessary health and safety related risks.

This policy also supports compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 by requiring suitable and sufficient risk assessment, proportionate control of risk, competent assistance, cooperation and coordination, emergency arrangements, and appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision for research activities.

2. Scope

This Policy shall set the framework to enable responsible research to be undertaken and shall apply to all research activities undertaken by Brunel University London (BUL).

This policy applies to employees, workers, students, visiting researchers, contractors, collaborators and others who may be affected by University research. It applies to research on University premises and to fieldwork, off-site, overseas and collaborative research, including work controlled by another organisation. Where duties overlap, responsibilities and local arrangements must be agreed before work begins.

3. Policy details

Research activity must not begin until a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been completed and the necessary controls are in place. The assessment must reflect the actual work, the people who may be affected and foreseeable abnormal events. It must be recorded, communicated and reviewed when the method, scale, location, personnel, equipment or substances change; when new information becomes available; or following an incident, near miss or control failure.

Risk control must follow the hierarchy of control, giving priority to elimination, substitution and engineering controls. Administrative controls and personal protective equipment must not be used as a substitute for reasonably practicable higher-level controls. Where personal protective equipment is required, it must be suitable, compatible, properly fitted, maintained, stored and provided without charge to workers covered by the applicable personal protective equipment legislation, including qualifying limb (b) workers.

Before specialist research begins, the responsible academic must confirm and document all required approvals, notifications, registrations, consents, licences, local rules and competent appointments. This includes, where applicable, work with hazardous substances, biological agents or genetically modified organisms, ionising radiation, lasers or other artificial optical radiation, pressure systems, lifting equipment, machinery, dangerous substances and explosive atmospheres.

Research equipment and safety-critical controls must be suitable for their intended and foreseeable use, installed and commissioned correctly, maintained in an efficient state, inspected or examined at appropriate intervals and used only by persons who are competent and authorised.

Emergency arrangements must address foreseeable research incidents, including serious injury, fire or explosion, chemical spill, loss of containment, release of a biological agent or genetically modified organism, radiation incident, power or ventilation failure and other loss of critical controls. Arrangements must include escalation, isolation, evacuation, first aid, spill response, communication, recovery and periodic testing where appropriate.

Relevant exposure monitoring and health surveillance must be provided where required by risk assessment or legislation. Results must be acted upon and records retained in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Risk assessments must take account of people who may be at particular risk, including young or inexperienced researchers, pregnant workers and new mothers, people with disabilities, lone

workers and those whose first language is not English. Reasonable adjustments, additional supervision and individual assessments must be provided where required.

Workers and their representatives must be consulted on health and safety matters that affect them, and researchers must be given relevant information about significant risks, control measures, emergency arrangements and changes before exposure occurs.

3.1. Shared Premises (Collaborations)

The Executive Board/ Leadership Team shall ensure that, when conducting collaborative work involving the use of shared premises or external contractors, a clear memorandum of understanding about the responsibility and arrangement for health, safety and security is in place.

For collaborative or shared-premises research, the parties must agree in writing who controls the work, premises, equipment, substances, supervision, emergency response, incident reporting and statutory notifications. Relevant risk information and changes must be exchanged and the arrangements reviewed throughout the collaboration.

3.2. Commitment to research ethics

Brunel University London is committed to the ethical conduct of research. All research should be conducted in a way that respects the rights and dignity of participants, minimizes harm, and maximizes benefits.

All researchers at Brunel University London are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards. This includes complying with all relevant legislation and regulations, as well as international ethical guidelines.

All researchers are expected to be transparent about their research methods and findings, and to share their research with the public in a way that is accessible and understandable when necessary.

To support our commitment to research ethics, there are number of measures in place, including:

- An ethics review process for all research projects involving human participants, personal data, or animal tissue.
- Training and support for researchers on research ethics.
- Committed to creating a culture of research integrity and excellence at Brunel University London. We believe that ethical research is essential to advancing knowledge and improving the lives of others.

Here are some specific examples of how researchers at Brunel University London can demonstrate their commitment to research ethics:

- Obtaining informed consent from all participants in research projects.
- Ensuring that research projects are designed to minimize harm and maximize benefits.
- Treating research participants with respect and dignity.
- Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of research participants' data.
- Reporting research findings accurately and honestly.
- Sharing research findings with the public in a way that is accessible and understandable.

By following these principles, researchers at Brunel University London can help to ensure that their research is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner.

3.3. Commitment to research integrity

Brunel University London is committed to the highest standards of research integrity and research integrity is essential to maintaining public trust in science and to ensuring the quality and reliability of research findings.

all researchers at Brunel University London are expected to be honest and transparent in their research practices. This includes:

- Accurately reporting research data and findings.
- Citing other researchers' work appropriately.
- Avoiding plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.
- Being open about the limitations of their research.
- Disclosing any potential conflicts of interest.

Researchers are also expected to be accountable for their research. This includes:

- Keeping accurate records of their research data and methods.
- Making their research data available to others for scrutiny, where possible.
- Cooperating with investigations into research misconduct.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. Executive Board /Leadership Team (This group typically consists of the Vice-Chancellor and President, Secretary, Chief Operating Officer, Deans and Directors).

Supporting the Vice-Chancellor and President, the Executive Board (EB) is responsible for implementing the following Responsible Research Policy within their area of responsibility (this responsibility extends to those reporting to a member of EB).

The Executive Board/Leadership Team shall ensure that adequate resources, competent health and safety assistance, governance arrangements and assurance processes are available and that significant research risks and compliance failures are escalated and reviewed.

4.2. Senior Managers (This group may include Deputy Deans/Directors, Subject/Divisional Leads and Directors of Research)

Senior Managers are responsible to the Executive Board/Leadership Team and, in order to enable responsible research, should ensure that:

- Health and safety policies, guidance and arrangements relevant to the expected risks in their research or work area are in place;
- Comprehensive risk management, identification and control programmes are in place, indicating how higher risk activities such as research involving hazardous equipment or substances, lone working or fieldwork will be managed;
- Appropriate permits and licences are obtained before the research begins, and records of authorisation, training, incidents and maintenance are kept locally. (as a minimum);
- Reports on health and safety performance are fed back to the University Health and Safety Committee at least Annually;

- Corporate systems are in place for identifying training needs and providing appropriate training and supervision for research staff and others in the workplace;
- The general and specific health and safety arrangements for contractors, visiting workers and visitors are explicit and communicated effectively; and
- The sanctions for not following Organisational, College and/or Institute policy or codes of practice are made clear to all.

Senior Managers shall ensure that research within their control is not authorised until required assessments, approvals and controls are in place. They shall monitor implementation and ensure that actions arising from inspections, audits, incidents, health surveillance or regulatory requirements are completed and verified.

4.3. Members of Academic Staff

Members of Academic staff are ultimately responsible to Senior Managers for the safe and legal conduct of research under their remit, a responsibility which cannot be delegated.

In terms of research, Academic Staff are generally experts in their field and are expected to have up-to- date knowledge about the risks associated with their research area. They should ensure that:

- They employ appropriately qualified researchers, training needs are assessed and training is available, both in general health and safety issues (such as risk assessment) and specific techniques or situations where there is significant risk (such as the use of lasers etc. or conducting research in the community);
- Special permission or licensing arrangements required for the work are in place and that appropriate supervision is available for researchers and technical support workers, dependant on the risk of the activity, age and experience of the individual;
- Programmes of work have been risk-assessed, and that the health and safety of researchers and others will not adversely be affected by known or emerging risks;
- Only Academic staff who comply with Senate regulations regarding supervision are allowed to supervise PhD students;
- Consideration is given to health and safety management, as well as the training and communication arrangements for researchers with disabilities or for those whose first language is not English;
- Robust emergency plans are in place for the workplace and for research activities which pose high safety risks and that they are made aware of reported incidents and near misses and will ensure that appropriate actions are taken to prevent a recurrence;
- They are informed about the outcome of safety performance measures such as inspections, safety tours, health surveillance, compliance with risk control systems and safe systems of work, training events attended work-related injury and ill-health figures;
- The monitoring workplace safety compliance and draw their manager's attention to deficiencies in health and safety management, such as unsafe acts or conditions, failure to follow safe systems of work, a lack of planned maintenance or inadequate facilities.

Academic Staff leading or supervising research shall ensure that risk assessments and safe systems of work remain current throughout the project; that researchers are competent and appropriately supervised; that required specialist approvals are obtained; and that work is paused and reassessed before any unapproved or material change is introduced.

4.4. Post-doctoral researchers

Post-doctoral researchers should be appropriately qualified in their research area(s) and aware of the risks inherent in the techniques, equipment and methods they use. They should be trained to:

- Carry out risk assessments and communicate information on risks and control measures to researchers they supervise, and others affected by the research. They should understand the University's policies, procedures and committee structures;
- Be effective supervisors, supportive, good at coaching and mentoring and take appropriate actions when made aware of health and safety management failures; and
- Contribute to the investigation of accidents and near misses that have affected their research team and use safe laboratory working practices and safe systems of work and reinforce the importance of good housekeeping and hygiene.

Although post-doctoral researchers may be given day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that research is carried out without causing unacceptable risks to health and safety, the overall health and safety responsibility flows through the line management chain and ultimately rests with the Vice Chancellor and Principal.

Post-doctoral researchers must work within approved assessments and controls, report changes or deficiencies promptly, stop work where there is serious or imminent danger, and supervise others only where they have been authorised and are competent to do so.

4.5. Project students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and trainee researchers

Trainee researchers and project students can't be assumed to be aware of the health and safety risks of the research or workplace and must be trained and supervised until they are competent to work without direct supervision.

Project students and trainee researchers must complete the required induction and training, follow approved controls and local rules, report incidents, near misses and changes promptly, and must not undertake unsupervised work until this has been explicitly authorised.

4.6. Support Workers (Technical)

The risks the research activity could present to cleaners, maintenance staff, engineers, technicians and so on must be assessed and adequate risk control measures put in place before the research project starts.

Research support workers must be informed about relevant risks, associated risk control measures and their personal responsibility for health and safety. They should also be competent to discharge their duties without causing harm to themselves or others.

Support workers must receive the relevant risk, isolation, decontamination, access and permit-to-work information before undertaking work in research areas, and must be told about any residual hazards or restrictions following research activity.

Competent Health and Safety Support

The Health, Safety and Environment Team and other appointed competent advisers provide specialist advice, guidance, training and assurance support. Operational responsibility for controlling research risk remains with the relevant managers and those directing or supervising the work.

5. Legal and other requirements

Applicable legal and other requirements must be identified during research planning and kept under review. The following are principal requirements and official guidance relevant to research; additional legislation may apply according to the activity.

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 - Legislation; HSE risk assessment guidance
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 (DSEAR) - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 2014 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, as amended in 2022 - 1992 Regulations; 2022 amendment; HSE guidance
- Work at Height Regulations 2005 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Control of Artificial Optical Radiation at Work Regulations 2010 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 and Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 - 1977 Regulations; 1996 Regulations; HSE guidance
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 - Legislation; Government guidance
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, where research installations or construction work are involved - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009 - Legislation; HSE guidance
- Equality Act 2010 - Legislation; Government guidance
- Human Tissue Act 2004, where applicable - Legislation; HTA research guidance

- Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, where applicable - Legislation; Government guidance

Additional HSE guidance

- Appointing a competent person - HSE guidance
- Emergency procedures - HSE guidance
- Lone working - HSE guidance
- Pregnant workers and new mothers - HSE guidance
- Health surveillance - HSE guidance
- Biological agents and infections at work - HSE guidance
- Storage of flammable liquids in laboratories - HSE guidance
- Lasers and artificial optical radiation - HSE guidance
- Consulting workers on health and safety - HSE guidance