

Manual Tasks Risk Management Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Procedure outlines how hazardous manual tasks will be identified, assessed and managed at The University of Queensland (UQ) to reduce the incidence and aggravation of musculoskeletal disorders related to manual tasks.

(2) This Procedure supports the [Health, Safety and Wellness Policy](#) and the [Health and Safety Risk Management Procedure](#), and applies to UQ workers across all UQ campuses and sites.

(3) UQ has a legislated obligation under the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and the [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011](#) to eliminate or minimise risks of worker injury associated with hazardous manual tasks. For further guidance on identification, assessment and control of manual tasks risks consult the [Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2021](#).

(4) Most jobs at UQ involve some type of manual tasks, such as (but not limited to) operating machinery, handling people or animals, pipetting and other laboratory work, lifting and moving equipment, and computer based work. Not all manual tasks are hazardous but as injuries can be caused by either a sudden event or gradual wear and tear, all manual work tasks should be considered in the identification of hazardous manual tasks.

Section 2 - Process and Key Controls

(5) Manual tasks that may be hazardous must be identified and assessed to enable effective risk control measures to be identified and implemented.

(6) The manual tasks risk management process is detailed in section 3 of this Procedure.

(7) Risk assessments must be conducted and documented using [UQSafe](#).

Section 3 - Key Requirements

Identification of Hazardous Manual Tasks

(8) A manual task may be hazardous if it involves one or more of the following characteristics:

- a. repetitive or sustained force;
- b. high or sudden force;
- c. repetitive movement;
- d. sustained and or awkward postures;
- e. exposure to sustained vibration.

(9) Note that tasks may involve more than one of these risk factors and the risk of a musculoskeletal injury developing increases significantly when there are two or more of these factors present. The duration of time that tasks which involve any of these factors are completed, must be determined and considered in the risk assessment.

(10) Potentially hazardous manual tasks may be identified by any of the following:

- a. direct observation of work;
- b. reviewing [UQSafe](#) incident and hazard data;
- c. reviewing workers compensation claim data;
- d. a survey of workers;
- e. relevant information from regulators, industry associations or specialists.

Risk Assessment

(11) Manual tasks that have been identified as potentially hazardous must be assessed to identify the contributing factors and source(s) of risk. Psychosocial risk factors may increase the likelihood of musculoskeletal disorders and these should also be considered during the risk assessment. This risk assessment is to determine which postures, movement or force pose a risk, at what point(s) in the task, for how long and why. Manual tasks risk assessments are to be completed in [UQSafe](#).

(12) The sources of risk must be considered during the risk assessment, as these will guide selection of risk control measures. Commonly, these are:

- a. the layout and design of the work area or equipment that is used;
- b. the nature, size, weight and number of items that are handled in the course of performing the task;
- c. how work is organised and the systems of work; and
- d. the environment in which the work task is performed.

(13) Where work tasks are sufficiently similar they may be assessed as a group.

(14) Assessment tools are available to assist in risk assessment including [Participative Ergonomics for Manual Tasks \(PEforM\)](#) and a risk assessment worksheet in the [Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2021](#).

(15) For guidance on conducting a risk assessment, contact the local Work Health and Safety Coordinator (WHSC) or the Health, Safety and Wellness Manager (HSW Manager) in the first instance. The Ergonomics Advisor (from the Health, Safety and Wellness Division) can provide guidance and support as required.

Risk Controls

(16) Hazardous manual tasks must be eliminated whenever possible. This is usually less costly and more achievable in the planning and design phase of a project or process, or during the procurement of equipment.

(17) Consideration should be given to manual task hazards in job design, before new equipment is purchased, and in the planning and design phase of projects to avoid introducing hazardous manual tasks.

(18) Where hazardous manual tasks cannot be eliminated, the [hierarchy of controls](#) must be considered when selecting suitable and appropriate control measures.

(19) The [Manual Tasks Risk Management Guideline](#) contains guidance on risk control strategies for different manual task types.

(20) Manual task control measures must be reviewed in the following circumstances:

- a. if a worker suffers an injury or illness due to the manual task;
- b. before changes are made to a manual task or the equipment used in a task;
- c. if new information about the task becomes available;

- d. if risk control measures do not adequately control the risk;
- e. before using a piece of equipment for a purpose other than for which it was designed.

Consultation

(21) Consultation with workers who perform the manual tasks, the local Work Health and Safety Coordinator (WHSC) and work group Health and Safety Representative (HSR), must occur throughout the risk management process. This is necessary to ensure controls will be effective, adhered to, and will not create new risks.

Record Keeping

(22) Identified hazards, incidents involving manual tasks and risk assessments are completed in [UQSafe](#). This system will retain records of risk assessments indefinitely.

(23) If additional resources are used to assess risks (e.g., the [PERforM](#) tool) these documents can be uploaded to the risk assessment.

Section 4 - Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Health, Safety and Wellness Division (HSW Division)

(24) The HSW Division is responsible for:

- a. providing support, training and advice to work areas regarding manual task risk assessment and selection of risk control measures; and
- b. assisting work areas with more complex assessments and/or application of specialist assessment tools for more detailed risk assessment.

Heads of Organisational Units

(25) Heads of Organisational Units have responsibility to:

- a. allocate adequate resources to eliminate or minimise as far as practicably possible, hazardous manual tasks;
- b. allocate adequate resources to allow for work to be done in accordance with agreed risk control strategies as detailed in the risk assessment;
- c. where appropriate, and in line with the risk assessment, allow for the procurement of appropriate plant and/or equipment that may alleviate hazardous manual tasks in their area of responsibility;
- d. review the performance of supervisors, staff and students with regard to their health and safety responsibilities for manual tasks; and
- e. ensure that appropriate records are kept relating to manual task activities.

Health, Safety and Wellness Managers (HSW Managers) and Work Health and Safety Coordinators (WHSCs)

(26) HSW Managers and WHSCs have responsibility to:

- a. provide guidance and support to supervisors and managers to complete manual task risk assessments; and
- b. facilitate completion of a risk assessment where there may be similar tasks or multiple supervisors involved for the same type of manual task.

Supervisors and Managers

(27) Supervisors and Managers have responsibility to:

- a. contribute to and supervise the development of manual task risk assessments for activities carried out by UQ workers under their supervision;
- b. approve [UQSafe](#) risk assessments involving manual tasks and ensure that the risk assessment is completed considering the [hierarchy of controls](#), and corrective actions are implemented;
- c. provide relevant induction and training for manual tasks;
- d. develop and maintain safe operating procedures for activities that involve manual tasks in consultation with workers;
- e. identify where plant and/or equipment could be used to eliminate or reduce the risk of injuries from manual tasks and propose the purchasing of these;
- f. provide appropriate supervision to ensure that UQ workers comply with recommended safe work practices and procedures;
- g. ensure the provision, maintenance and proper use of mechanical equipment used for manual tasks; and
- h. review manual tasks risk management plans and ensure that new plans are developed if the nature of work changes and/or a risk management plan proves to be inappropriate.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

(28) Where there is a HSR for the nominated workgroup, they should be invited to participate in manual task risk assessments or to review and comment on proposed risk control measures and completed assessments. A HSR may request Managers to review hazardous manual task risk controls where there are reported injury concerns.

UQ Workers

(29) UQ workers are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure their own health and safety when performing manual tasks and that their actions or omissions do not increase risks for others. UQ workers have responsibility to:

- a. comply with reasonable instruction and cooperate with reasonable procedures related to manual tasks;
- b. participate in development of manual task risk management plans and obtain approval from the supervisor and Head of Organisational Unit before work commences;
- c. conduct work in compliance with risk management plans as recorded in the risk assessment;
- d. participate in manual tasks induction and training programs as instructed by the supervisor;
- e. report identified manual task hazards in [UQSafe](#); and
- f. promptly report via [UQSafe](#) (or verbally to the supervisor if access unavailable) any accident, injury or near miss event associated with manual tasks.

Section 5 - Monitoring, Review and Assurance

(30) Supervisors and Managers review all risk assessments and risk control measures for their teams.

(31) The HSW Division will:

- a. review this Procedure regularly for relevance, currency with legislation and evidence based recommendations;
- b. periodically monitor Faculty, Institute and Central Support Services compliance with the requirements of this Procedure; and
- c. conduct periodic review and monitoring of samples of manual task risk assessments in [UQSafe](#).

Section 6 - Recording and Reporting

(32) Risk assessments for hazardous manual tasks must be recorded in the [UQSafe](#).

(33) Organisational Units are responsible for accurate recording of local procedures involving manual tasks, and for maintaining training records of all relevant training of personnel.

Section 7 - Appendix

Definitions

Terms	Definitions
Hierarchy of Controls	The recommended approach used for controlling risks in the workplace, that ranks risk controls from the highest level of protection and reliability through to the lowest and least reliable protection.
Manual Task	A task involving physical work that may require a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain a person, animal or thing.
Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD)	An injury to, or disease of, the musculoskeletal system. Examples include sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments and tendons, joint and bone injuries, nerve injuries, back injuries, soft tissue injuries including hernias, chronic pain. It does not include an injury caused by crushing, entrapment, or cutting from the mechanical operation of plant.
Psychosocial Risk Factors	Aspects of work that have potential to cause psychological harm and compromise a worker's health and wellbeing. Examples include high job demands with low control, poor support and adverse workplace interactions.
UQSafe	UQ online system for recording risk assessments, injuries/illness, near miss and hazard reporting and certifications.
UQ workers	For the purposes of this Procedure includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- staff - continuing, fixed-term, research (contingent funded) and casual staff;- contractors, subcontractors and consultants;- visiting academics and researchers;- affiliates - academic title holders, visiting academics, Emeritus Professors, adjunct and honorary title-holders, Industry Fellows and conjoint appointments;- higher degree by research students; and- volunteers and students undertaking work experience.

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