

HRP14: Workplace Environment and Facilities Management

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the management of risks associated with the workplace environment and facilities at Southern Cross University (SCU) are appropriately managed and controlled.

(2) The purpose of this procedure is to ensure Southern Cross University's management, employees, contractors, students, visitors and others are aware of the risks associated with the workplace environment and facilities in the workplace, management strategies and to provide advice on appropriate controls.

(3) All employees, students and others including both independent contractors and contractors under SCU control are to be made aware of and follow this procedure.

(4) This Procedure applies to all SCU Work Units and sites. The procedure aligns with WHS legislation in the relevant jurisdictions SCU operates in.

Section 2 - Definitions

Assistance	Support and aid provided to employees.
Emergency Services	Public organizations and agencies that provide immediate aid and support during emergencies and disasters.
Hazard	A situation or thing that has the potential to harm a person. Hazards at work may include noisy machinery, a moving forklift, chemicals, electricity, working at heights, a repetitive job, bullying and violence at the workplace.
Health and safety committee	A consultative body established under the WHS Act. The committee's functions include facilitating cooperation between employees and the person conducting a business or undertaking to ensure employees' health and safety at work, and assisting to develop work health and safety standards, rules and procedures for the workplace.
Health and safety representative	An employee who has been elected by their work group under the WHS Act to represent them on health and safety matters.
Reasonably Practical	Reasonably practicable means that which is, or was at a particular time, reasonably able to be done to ensure health and safety, considering and weighing up all relevant matters including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the likelihood of the hazard or the risk concerned occurring. 1. the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or the risk. 1. what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or risk, and ways of eliminating or minimising the risk. 1. the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, and 1. after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

Remote	Remote or isolated work is work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done, Assistance from other people includes rescue, medical assistance and emergency services.
Risk	The possibility harm (death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard.
RiskWare	Electronic database for the reporting of all incidents and near misses. RiskWare includes the investigation of incidents against systemic causes, the assignment of corrective actions, and regulatory and performance reporting.

Section 3 - General Principles

(5) SCU minimises the risks arising from the physical work environment by:

- a. Ensuring all employees have access to this procedure and will be inducted to the Workplace Health & Safety Management System (WHSMS)
- b. Ensuring allocated WHS roles, Health and Safety Representatives (HSR's) and others in authority to complete regular audit and assurance activities in accordance with WHSMP15: Audit and Assurance Procedure.
- c. Ensuring all employees have access to and understand how to request maintenance or repairs via the SCU Maintenance Management System.
- d. Dedicating the relevant partner service provider to oversee the condition, ongoing maintenance and construction of safe work environments.

(6) The SCU facilities and working environment is designed to prompt safe, healthy and ergonomic practices. They should be clean, safe, accessible and in good working order.

(7) SCU workplaces and facilities are scheduled subject to facility use, operating hours and end-user requirements.

Consultation

(8) SCU will ensure that consultation occurs when assessing the adequacy of or making changes to facilities, with employees, health and safety representatives, and Work Unit Managers that may be using or affected using amenities to ensure both the physical and mental well-being in the workplace.

(9) Consultation concerning cleaning services is undertaken during contract renewal periods.

Information, Instruction and Training

(10) SCU must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the provision of training, instructions, or supervision necessary to protect all persons from risks arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of SCU business.

(11) SCU will ensure that the information, training, or instruction is suitable and adequate to address the nature of the work and the degree of risk, confirming employee understanding and application of controls.

Work Layout

Entry and Exit

(12) The layout of the workplace allows and is maintained to allow employees, students and others to move about without risk to health and safety both in normal working conditions and in an emergency.

(13) The entries and exits should be slip-resistant under wet and dry conditions. Aisles and walkways kept free of furniture or other obstructions. Where necessary to clearly define entry and exit routes, the boundaries of the route should be permanently and appropriately marked e.g. for pedestrians and mobile plant. All entry and exit points and

travel paths/stairs should be well lit.

(14) Separate entries and exits for pedestrians and mobile plant e.g. forklifts, electric buggies, trucks, must be used, e.g., workshops.

(15) During wet weather conditions entries and exits must have controls in place to reduce the risks of slips, trips and falls. Where an employee is unable to clean a spill immediately, Property Services should be located and the area contained to prevent others entering the spill location.

(16) The location of exits should be clearly marked including on diagrams, and signs should be posted to show the direction to exit doors to aid emergency evacuation and fire equipment.

Housekeeping

(17) In maintaining a safe work environment, protocols must be adhered to:

- a. Spills on floors should be cleaned up immediately
- b. If spills are unable to be immediately addressed then the floor area shall be flagged or cordoned off using appropriate bollards/barricades or signage until the spill is managed, walkways should be kept clear of obstructions, emergency exits and access to emergency equipment e.g. fire extinguishers and hose reels etc. shall be kept clear at all times.
- c. All work materials stored neatly, and equipment stored to prevent damage
- d. Waste regularly removed and appropriately disposed of. Waste to appropriately separated to ensure no contamination and pests.
- e. Tools and equipment, extension leads etc. shall be used and stored appropriately during the conduct of work in order to eliminate trip hazards.
- f. Continuous sightings or evidence of pests and vermin should be reported to Property Services via Archibus.

Work Areas

(18) The layout of work areas should be designed to provide sufficient clear space between furniture, fixtures, and fittings so that employees can move about freely without the risk of strain or injury and evacuate quickly in case of an emergency.

(19) In determining how much space is needed, the following should be considered.

- a. the physical actions needed to perform the task.
- b. the need to move around while working.
- c. whether the task is to be performed from a sitting or standing position.
- d. access to workstations.
- e. the equipment to be handled and the personal protective equipment (PPE) that may be worn to perform the work. This should also take into account the length of time the space is used, and whether there are any hazardous substances used in the space, and the amount of ventilation.

Workstations

(20) Workstations should be designed so that employees can carry out their work in a comfortable, upright position with shoulders relaxed and upper arms close to the body. For tasks conducted in a seated position, seating should:

- a. Provide good body support,
- b. Provide foot support, preferably with both feet flat on the floor, otherwise a footrest should be provided,

- c. Allows space for leg clearance and freedom of movement.
- d. Minimise eye strain and take bright lighting location into account.

Floors and other surfaces

(21) Floors must be inspected regularly and maintained to eliminate or minimise slip and trip hazards. Common hazards include trailing cables, uneven edges, broken surfaces, gratings or covers, loose mats or carpet tiles. Floor surfaces should be suitable to the work area. Floor surfaces should have enough grip to prevent slipping, especially in areas that may become wet or contaminated, e.g mould. Floor should be strong enough to support loads placed on them.

Lighting

(22) Sufficient lighting must be provided, whether it is from a natural or artificial source, to allow safe movement around the workplace and to allow employees to perform their job without having to adopt awkward postures or strain their eyes to see.

(23) When considering the type and level of lighting needed in the workplace, the following factors should be taken into account:

- a. the nature of the work activity
- b. the nature of hazards and risks in the workplace
- c. the work environment
- d. the level of natural light including transitions or changes throughout the day
- e. current level of artificial lighting
- f. glare
- g. contrast, and
- h. reflections.

(24) Measures to prevent low or excessive levels of lighting, glare or reflections include:

- a. providing extra lighting, such as a lamp on a movable arm
- b. changing the position of existing lights
- c. changing the location of the workstation
- d. increasing or decreasing the number of lights
- e. changing the type of lighting used for example from white light to blue light
- f. changing the diffusers or reflectors on existing lights, and
- g. using screens, visors, shields, hoods, curtains, blinds or external louvres to reduce reflections, shadows and glare

Air Quality

(25) Workplaces are to be ventilated which includes:

- a. Workplaces should be adequately ventilated with fresh, clean air drawn from outside and uncontaminated by discharge from flues or other outlets and be circulated through the workplace.
- b. Inside buildings may have natural ventilation, mechanical ventilation, or air-conditioning.
- c. Air conditioning and other ventilation systems should be regularly serviced and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. For locations where high-risk chemicals are being used, fume cupboards will be installed to provide a safe working environment.

(26) Air quality should provide a comfortable environment in relation to air temperature, air movement, and prevent the excessive accumulation of odours. And further, reduce the levels of respiratory by-products, especially carbon dioxide, and other indoor contaminants that may arise from work activities.

(27) Employees must not be exposed to a substance or mixture e.g. hazardous chemical in an airborne concentration that exceeds exposure standards.

(28) Where there is a risk of airborne contaminants exceeding the workplace exposure levels, monitoring must be conducted, and results recorded and kept for 30 years.

Heat and Cold

(29) Work should be carried out in an environment where a temperature range is comfortable for employees and suits the work they carry out.

(30) Air temperatures that are too high or too low can contribute to fatigue and heat or cold related illnesses. The following control measures should be considered for hot environments:

- a. slow down the pace of work if possible
- b. provide a supply of cool drinking water
- c. provide a cool, well-ventilated area where employees can take rest breaks
- d. provide opportunities for employees who are not used to working in hot conditions to acclimatise, for example job rotation and regular rest breaks
- e. ensure light clothing is worn to allow free movement of air and sweat evaporation,
- f. ensure employees have been trained about the hazards of working in hot conditions and how to recognise and act on symptoms of heat-related illness.

(31) The following control measures should be considered for cold environments:

- a. provide localised heating,
- b. provide protection from wind and rain,
- c. provide protection through warm and if necessary waterproof clothing
- d. provide opportunities for employees who are not used to working in cold conditions to acclimatise, for example job rotation and regular rest breaks, and
- e. ensure employees are trained about the hazards of working in cold conditions and how to recognise and act on symptoms of hypothermia

(32) First aid is vital when a worker is suffering from a heat or cold related illness. Immediate medical attention should be sought if a worker experiences heat exhaustion, heat stroke or hypothermia.

Facilities

Drinking Water

(33) An adequate supply of clean drinking water must be provided free of charge.

(34) Water should be positioned where it can be easily accessed, close to where hot or strenuous work is being undertaken, separate from toilet or washing facilities and at or below 24 degrees Celsius. Water must also be supplied in a hygienic manner, so that employees do not drink directly from a shared container, e.g. drinking fountain, disposable or washable containers, for mobile or remote employees either access to public drinking water, bottled water, or containers.

Toilets

(35) Access to clean toilets must be provided for all employees. Generally separate toilets should be provided in workplaces where there are both male and female employees. The number and specification of toilets for workplaces within buildings is set out in the National Construction Code of Australia. Toilets must be accessible for all employees including employees with a disability.

Hand washing

(36) Hand washing facilities must be provided to enable employees to maintain good standards of personal hygiene. For mobile or remote work-employees should have alternative hand hygiene facilities.

(37) Hand washing facilities should:

- a. be accessible at all times to work areas, eating areas and the toilets
- b. be separate from troughs or sinks used in connection with the work process
- c. contain both hot and cold water taps or temperature mixers
- d. be protected from the weather
- e. be supplied with non-irritating soap preferably from a soap dispenser, and
- f. contain hygienic hand drying facilities, for example automatic air dryers or paper towels.

(38) Where a business engages in activities such as food preparation or health care, there are also duties under health legislation in relation to hand washing facilities.

Dining facilities

(39) Employees should be provided with access to hygienic dining facilities for eating their meals and for preparing and storing food. A separate dining room should be provided if 10 or more employees usually eat at the workplace at the same time.

(40) Dining facilities should be supplied with:

- a. adequate numbers of tables and seats to accommodate each employee likely to use the dining room at one time.
- b. a sink with hot and cold water, washing utensils and detergent.
- c. an appliance for boiling water.
- d. food warming appliances.
- e. clean storage, including a refrigerator.
- f. vermin-proof rubbish bins, which should be emptied daily.

Change Rooms

(41) If it is a requirement for employees to change in and out of clothing due to the nature of their work, access to private changing areas with secure storage for personnel belongings should be provided. The door should also be capable of being locked.

Personal storage

(42) Where reasonably practicable accessible and secure storage should be provided at the workplace for personal items belonging to the employee. The storage should be separate from that provided for personal protective equipment in cases where contamination is possible.

Shower Facilities

(43) Where dirty, hot or hazardous work is undertaken showering facilities should be provided. Showers should have:

- a. a floor area of not less than 1.8m²
- b. a slip resistant surface that is capable of being sanitised
- c. partitions between each shower that are at least 1650mm high and no more 300mm above the floor
- d. an adjacent dressing area for each shower containing a seat and hooks
- e. a lockable door enclosing the shower and dressing cubicle

(44) Where the substances or materials handled are contaminants, decontamination facilities e.g. safety showers are to be available.

Outdoor work

(45) Outdoor employees should have access to shelter for eating meals and taking breaks and to protect them in adverse weather conditions.

(46) They should be provided with protection against ultraviolet exposure, e.g. reorganising outdoor work so that employees carry out alternative tasks, or work in shade when the sun is most intense (10.00 am – 2.00 pm and 11am-3pm during daylight saving time.) and be provided with personal protective clothing as per HRP15: Personal Protective Equipment

Noise

(47) A noise risk assessment should be carried out when employees and others may be exposed to excessive noise levels. Contact the SCU WHS team for assistance with this assessment.

(48) The aim of a noise risk assessment is to:

- a. identify whether the noise under investigation is excessive or not.
- b. establish the noise characteristics and the daily duration of exposure.
- c. identify all persons likely to be exposed to excessive noise.
- d. identify all items of plant and equipment likely to cause excessive noise.
- e. obtain information on work practices and associated noise sources.
- f. identify what higher order controls can be put in place to reduce noise level exposure.
- g. check the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce noise level exposure.
- h. choose appropriate personal hearing protectors for those employees and other persons exposed to risks from excessive noise.
- i. define designated hearing protection areas at work.

(49) Noise assessments should be repeated at least every five years or whenever there is a change of plant, work processes, building structure or duration of work arrangements.

(50) Noise assessment records should be kept at the workplace and made available for inspection by employees.

(51) Audiometric testing is required for employees who are frequently required to use PPE to protect them from the risk of hearing loss associated with noise that exceeds the exposure standard.

Remote and isolated work

(52) Remote or isolated work means work that is isolated from assistance of other people because of location, time, or

the nature of the work.

(53) Risks that arise from remote and/or isolated work must be assessed and include 'safe systems of work' including means of communication.

(54) All employees must have access to assistance whilst at work which includes, rescue, medical, and access to emergency services.

(55) Remote or isolated work includes fieldwork. Fieldwork is any work, study or research authorised by SCU and undertaken by employees, students, contractors, visitors or other approved participants at a location off campus and outside of urban areas.

(56) Refer to HRP20: Lone and Isolated Work for more information and the SCU Outdoor Fieldwork Safety Policy.

Workplace Inspections

(57) A Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) inspection is designed to identify and eliminate or control workplace hazards. Inspections carried out on a regular basis are the key to preventing accidents and injury in work areas. Inspections of high-risk work areas such as laboratories, workshops, plant rooms, chemical storage facilities, art studios are to be carried out every 3 months. Low risk areas such as lecture theatres, offices, kitchens, and toilet facilities are to be carried out every 6 months.

(58) What to consider when conducting a workplace inspection:

- a. the work premises,
- b. work practices and work systems,
- c. hazardous substances, e.g handling, storage, transport and disposal
- d. manual handling
- e. layout and design of the workplace e.g lighting and workstation design
- f. biological organisms, products or substances
- g. physical environment including electrical, fire/explosion, slipping and tripping, contact with moving objects, exposure to noise, heat, cold, vibration or radiation hazards.

(59) Safety Support Officers should record any potential hazards on the checklist and the corrective actions required in RiskWare. Any hazards identified must be eliminated or controlled in accordance with WHSMP02: Hazard Identification, Risk and Opportunity Management Procedure.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(60) Refer to WHS Responsibility and Accountability Statement.

Section 5 - Records of Documentation

(61) All relevant documentation will be recorded and kept in accordance with WHS Legislation and other legislative obligations including:

- a. Workplace Inspections Checklists (WIC)
- b. Hazard identification forms utilised to support the WIC process
- c. Risk assessments undertaken as a result of the WIC
- d. Training evidence/licences.

Section 6 - Revision and approval history

(62) This procedure will be reviewed as per nominated review dates or because of other events, such as:

- a. Internal and external audit outcomes.
- b. Legislative changes.
- c. Outcomes from management reviews.
- d. Incidents.

Section 7 - References

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (QLD) 2017 (NSW)
Managing the work environment and facilities Code of Practice. 2021 (QLD) 2022 (NSW)

Section 8 - Related Documents

WHSMP15: Audit and Assurance Procedure.
WHSMP02: Hazard Identification, Risk and Opportunity Management Procedure.
WHSMP15: Audit and Assurance Procedure.
WHS Responsibility and Accountability Statement.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Kim Franks Vice President (People and Culture)
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