

# University of Glasgow Procedure for Lone Activities

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### What is this procedure about?

This procedure sets out the arrangements for the safe management of the University's activities involving lone work and study. It identifies the types of situations that should be considered to be lone activities, provides guidance on managing these activities safely and outlines the measures available, or that should be considered, to minimise the risks that may arise from lone activities.

### Who should follow this procedure?

All staff and students should be aware of this procedure. However, it is the responsibility of each College, School and Service to ensure that their employees and students involved in lone activities, their planning, authorisation, monitoring and administration, are fully conversant in the principles and arrangements highlighted herein.

### Who should I contact with any queries about this procedure?

Please contact Selina Woolcott, Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing

## 1. PURPOSE AND LEGAL BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This document sets out the University's requirements around lone working and study activities (lone activities) and provides guidance on assessment and management of activities where staff or students may be working or studying alone and physically isolated from others. If lone activities are also happening outside normal operating hours for the location, this should be read in conjunction with the Procedure for Work or Study outside of normal building operating hours  
<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/seps/az/outofhoursactivity/>
- 1.2 Its purpose is to ensure that systems are put in place to support the commitment made by the University of Glasgow (UofG) to protect those who working or studying by themselves for significant periods of time from any potential associated risks.
- 1.3 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, places legal duties upon employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees at work, and others affected by the work activity (including students), "so far as is reasonably practicable" (this is a legally defined term - see later definition.)
- 1.4 Lone activities are not specifically mentioned in the Act and there is no specific legislation in respect of working alone but the associated risks must be considered as part of the University's general safety duties.
- 1.5 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to make "suitable and sufficient" assessments of foreseeable risks associated with all work activities so risk assessments must be conducted for lone activities.

## 2. USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Lone Worker	<p><i>“An employee whose work activities involve working time operating in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers, or without any kind of close or direct supervision”.</i> (Health &amp; Safety Executive)</p> <p>It is recognised that most members of staff will spend short periods of their time working alone. However, for the purpose of this procedure, lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision for longer periods such as, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees working away from their base where their work may be carried out in e.g. client’s home and other University or business premises;</li> <li>• Employees working alone in fixed establishments i.e. only one member of staff works on the premises, staff working separately from others, staff working outside normal operational hours; and</li> <li>• Employees transiting between sites whilst on company business.</li> </ul> <p>Many people may work without immediate and direct contact with colleagues but will have colleagues relatively close by within the building. This is not typically considered to be lone working within the terms of this guidance. However, the degree of isolation, duration of isolation and the physical risks inherent in the work do have to be taken into account and should form part of a risk-based judgement on this.</p> <p>Circumstances where a building has an abnormally low occupancy may also create a lone working situation where that has not been the case previously. Covid-19 related occupancy restrictions are one example of where such a situation may arise.</p>
Lone Study	<p>Lone study may occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During normal operational hours at a remote location either on University premises or during a domiciliary, other offsite visit, including domestic and overseas travel for study/research purposes;</li> <li>• When carrying out course or study-related activities outside normal operational hours, whether at the University or elsewhere.</li> </ul> <p>It is not the same as the chance occurrence of a student being on their own. For example, at every lecture there is somebody who arrives first or leaves last, or, in another situation, an individual may briefly go into an unoccupied room. Neither of these is lone working.</p>
Hazard	Something which has the potential to cause injury, illness or harm.
Risk	Risk is the likelihood that a hazard will have an adverse outcome with a consideration of how bad the outcome is likely to be.
Risk Assessment	An overall process to identify risk and evaluate whether the risk is acceptable, or not, taking into account new/best practice.
Reasonably Practicable	The most practicable solution, taking into account cost, time and effort against the level of risk. High risk would warrant more money, time and effort to reduce the risk.
Severity	Most likely predictable consequence to the individual or organisation if the circumstances in question were to occur. <i>(This should not automatically be assumed to be the most severe “worst case” scenario possible but should usually be taken as the most likely and realistic adverse outcome.)</i>
Likelihood	Probability of an event occurring, wherever possible based upon the frequency of previous occurrences.

### **3. KEY THEMES**

3.1 There are 6 key themes to this procedure:

- Risk assessment
- Risks specific to lone activities
- Risks specific to lone individuals
- Training
- Supervision and monitoring
- Support and emergency arrangements

### **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **4.1 Line Managers and Academic Supervisors.**

- a) Ensuring staff and students are made aware of this procedure and the associated arrangements in place to support safe lone activities.
- b) Monitoring lone activities in their area of responsibility to ensure that they are risk assessed and conducted safely.
- c) Contributing to (where necessary) and reviewing lone activity risk assessments to ensure they give appropriate consideration to the foreseeable range of hazards likely to be encountered and identify suitable control measures to minimise the risk from these hazards.
- d) Ensuring any equipment, training, or other materials identified in the risk assessment as suitable control measures, are made available as necessary.
- e) In the event of reported incidents, ensuring individuals are properly supported, incidents are appropriately investigated and risk assessments reviewed accordingly.

#### **4.2 Heads of Schools/ Directors of Institutes/ Services**

- a) Ensuring managers/ academic supervisors, staff and students are made aware of this procedure and the associated arrangements in place to support safe lone activities.
- b) Establishing departmental procedures to identify, eliminate or manage the risks associated with lone activities.
- c) Ensuring individuals working alone are identified.
- d) Ensuring a system of risk assessment is in operation for lone activities and that suitable control measures are identified and implemented.
- e) Ensuring spaces likely to be used for lone activities (e.g. small or late-hour study spaces, research labs) are identified and suitably equipped/monitored for lone activities as per the activity risk assessment.
- f) Monitoring and managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through a suitable system of reporting, investigation and recording of incidents.

#### **4.3 Heads of College/ Deputy Chief Operating Officer**

- a) Ensuring the Schools, Institutes and/ or Services within their area of responsibility are made aware of this procedure and the associated arrangements to support safe lone activities.
- b) Having suitable resource strategies in place within their College/ Services to support safe lone activities for their staff and students.

#### **4.4 Chief Operating Officer**

- a) Ensuring appointment of suitable competent person(s) to advise on the safety and security aspects of lone activities.
- b) Having arrangements in place for monitoring lone activities across the University to ensure that they may be conducted safely.
- c) Ensuring necessary procedures, resources and systems are in place to support safe, lone activities for the University's staff and students

### **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 Risk assessment is essential to good risk management and must be carried out by competent persons – that is a person or group of persons with a good knowledge and understanding of both the work being carried out and the key features of risk assessment (see below). This also applies to specific risk assessments, including those conducted for lone activities. Whilst flexible hours are a valuable and necessary component of the working environment, the argument for activities outside normal operating hours should not be used to justify poor planning and undisciplined arrangements so, wherever reasonably practicable, activities should be contained within recognised operating hours.
- 5.2 The risk assessment should identify the hazards associated with the activity and carrying it out unaccompanied. In most cases, the hazards associated with the task are likely to be the same whether it is carried out alone or accompanied, although the possibility of violence towards the lone operative may need to be considered.
- 5.3 Any risks associated with the activity being conducted alone should be assessed and safe working arrangements to control the risk identified. Although lone activities may not introduce any new hazards (in which case there is no need to document a separate risk assessment), the risks may differ significantly when a task is carried out unaccompanied.
- 5.4 Risk assessments may need to be conducted on the following basis:
  - Generically, to consider one particular range of activity;(e.g. routine cleaning work) or
  - Individually, to consider the risks relating to a specific activity (e.g. a particular fieldwork trip)
- 5.5 Specific risks that may require additional intention could include:
  - Risks specific to the lone activity
  - Risks specific to the lone operative
  - What training is required?
  - How will the person be supervised and monitored?
  - Support and emergency arrangements.
- 5.6 Although risk assessment is itself a planning process, there is a legal requirement that the significant findings of the risk assessment be recorded. There is some choice in whether this is done as a single-issue lone activity risk assessment or as part of the wider risk assessment of the activity.

5.7 There is a risk assessment template which may assist in preparing risk assessments and can be found on SEPS Lone Activities – Work and Study webpage at

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/seps/az/loneandoutofhoursactivities/>

5.8 Once the safe working arrangements have been implemented, they need to be regularly monitored and reviewed locally, as part of day-to-day interactions with staff and students, to ensure they remain effective. More formal monitoring of the arrangements will also take place as part of the University's health and safety audit programme. Staff and students undertaking lone activities must be instructed to report any incidents which could affect their safety, to allow a proper review of the adequacy of the working arrangements.

## **6. RISKS SPECIFIC TO THE LONE ACTIVITY**

6.1 Lone operatives should not be placed at more risk than other workers and extra control measures may be needed. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Those with responsibility for carrying out risk assessments should ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there safe access and egress? (This may include the immediate local environment or the surrounding location, for instance in the case of remote work)
- If working off-site, are the welfare facilities adequate?
- Can one person safely handle all equipment, substances and goods involved in the work?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- How will the person get help in an emergency?
- Is the work activity occurring within broadly normal operating hours or outside of these? If the latter, additional measures may need to be considered to account for there being fewer people about, particularly fewer security staff, to assist in emergencies or in monitoring arrivals and departures of those conducting lone activities.

## **7. RISKS SPECIFIC TO THE LONE OPERATIVE**

7.1 The risk assessment should consider whether the individuals involved could have medical conditions or personal circumstances that would place them at greater risk when involved in a lone activity.

7.2 If the manager or supervisor is aware that a lone worker or student has a medical condition or disability, they should check whether they require any additional support for them to work alone safely. When medical advice is necessary, or advice on reasonable adjustments required, the Occupational Health Unit and/ or Disability Service should be consulted.

7.3 A specific consideration for students undertaking lone activities may include maturity and how that impacts on their experience to recognise potentially dangerous situations and to respond appropriately.

- 7.4 If there are other circumstances which could place a particular individual at greater risk (for instance, previous threats against an individual conducting lone work or study involving patients/ subjects/ communities etc.) then additional consideration should be given as to how or if the individual can be supported to continue the lone activity safely.

## 8. TRAINING

- 8.1 Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may also be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations.
- 8.2 Those involved in lone work or study need to be able to understand the risks associated with the activity and have suitable and sufficient training, instruction and information to support this.
- 8.3 Managers/ supervisors should establish clear procedures and set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst operating alone. There should be a clear explanation of the circumstances in which it is reasonable and expected to stop work and seek advice.
- 8.4 It is the manager/ supervisor's responsibility to ensure those engaged in lone activities are competent and equipped to carry out the activity unaccompanied and to respond appropriately to unexpected circumstances, even if out with the scope of any training received.

## 9. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING

- 9.1 Although those involved in lone activities cannot be subject to constant supervision, there is still a duty on the University to provide appropriate control of the activity. Supervision complements the information, instruction and training provided and helps to ensure that staff and students understand the risks associated with their activity and that necessary safety precautions are carried out. It also provides guidance in situations of uncertainty. The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved, where and when the activity is taking place and the ability of the lone operative to identify and handle health and safety issues. The level of supervision required is a management/ supervisory decision which should be based on the findings of the risk assessments. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. Contact arrangements should be documented as part of the risk assessment. Methods of supervision and periodic contact *may* include:
- Supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working/ studying alone;
  - Supervisors maintaining contact with those involved in lone activities using either a telephone or radio or possibly e-mail or text as available.
  - The use of signing in/out system; and
  - Checks that a lone operative has returned to their base or home on completion of their tasks.
- 9.2 In most situations it is expected that managers/ supervisors would put in place measures to ensure the arrival and departure of lone operatives at the locus of the activity is logged. This could be via a range of methods, which could include:

- email or telephone contact with the Gatehouse (campus-based activities),
- electronic/ digital or hard copy sign in-sign out systems (electronic being preferable) in building-based activities or
- telephone calls/ emails to an identified contact for more remote activities/ overseas trips to give regular updates.
- Use of the SafeZone App (see below)

As well as helping identify whereabouts, these arrangements are designed to act as an alert to circumstances which could indicate a problem, such as the lone operative having an accident or being taken unwell. Contingency plans should specify the action to be taken if a pre-arranged contact cannot be reached, or if an alarm device is activated, and should be included as part of the risk assessment.

- 9.3 The SafeZone App is designed to enable users to log on and off at different locations on University premises. On University premises, and elsewhere, the app also enables them to summon help through a one-touch activation on their mobile 'phone screen. This will connect to the Security and Operational Support 24-hr control room team. The app can also be used to send out notifications to all or selected users about specific problems or hazards - such as a fire situation, impending severe weather warning etc..

## **10.SUPPORT AND EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS**

- 10.1 Managers/ supervisors must consider what needs to be put in place to manage the event of a person becoming unwell, having an accident or experiencing another emergency such as a fire arising in the building.
- 10.2 The risk assessment should take account of the fact that a lone operative is more vulnerable when the unexpected happens and must set out how emergency support will be provided. Where possible the risk assessment should identify foreseeable events and emergency procedures should be established and employees and students trained in them.
- 10.3 There should always be a defined system of periodic contact in operation. This may be by use of mobile phone, periodic check visits or other means of ensuring that a person does not work or study alone for prolonged periods without any contact. The frequency of contact needed will be informed by the nature of the risks involved in the activity. There should always be a method agreed to ensure that the person has safely left site at the end of the day.

## **11.MONITORING & REVIEW**

- 11.1 The implementation of this procedure will be monitored through the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee with a review at 3-yearly intervals.