



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

UOW SAFE@WORK

WORK ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES

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1 Introduction

Having a safe and healthy physical work environment, including amenities and facilities, is critical to eliminating and controlling risk in the workplace. This includes ensuring the work environment, facilities and amenities are compliant with legislative and other identified requirements.

2 Scope

This document provides guidance for the provision of a safe work environment including facilities, amenities and accommodation provided by the University of Wollongong (UOW). This includes UOW workplaces that are mobile, temporary and remote.

Facilities refer to toilets, washrooms, showers, lockers, dining areas, drinking water, etc.

3 Legislative Requirements

University work environment and facilities are required to be compliant with Section 40 and 41 of the WHS Regulation:

Regulation 40: A person conducting a business or undertaking at a workplace must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the following:

- a) the layout of the workplace allows, and the workplace is maintained so as to allow, for persons to enter and exit and to move about without risk to health and safety, both under normal working conditions and in an emergency,
- b) work areas have space for work to be carried out without risk to health and safety,
- c) floors and other surfaces are designed, installed and maintained to allow work to be carried out without risk to health and safety,
- d) lighting enables:
 - i. each worker to carry out work without risk to health and safety, and
 - ii. persons to move within the workplace without risk to health and safety, and
 - iii. safe evacuation in an emergency,
- e) ventilation enables workers to carry out work without risk to health and safety,
- f) workers carrying out work in extremes of heat or cold are able to carry out work without risk to health and safety,
- g) work in relation to or near essential services does not give rise to a risk to the health and safety of persons at the workplace.

Regulation 41: A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision of adequate facilities for workers, including toilets, drinking water, washing and eating facilities. These facilities must be in good working order, clean, safe and accessible. When considering how to provide and maintain facilities that are adequate and accessible, a person conducting a business or undertaking must consider all relevant matters including:

- a) the nature of the work being carried out at the workplace
- b) the nature of the hazards at the workplace
- c) the size, location and nature of the workplace
- d) the number and composition of the workers at the workplace.

Additional information is provided in the Code of Practice: Managing the Work Environment and Facilities. Work facilities and amenities are required to be designed and built in accordance with the National Construction Code of Australia and local council requirements.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Facilities Management Division (or Equivalent)

The Facilities Management Division (FMD) are responsible for ensuring that workplace amenities and facilities:

- are designed and installed according to legislative and UOW requirements
- are inspected and maintained to ensure a safe level of hygiene.

4.2 University Management and Supervisors

Management and supervisors of faculties, divisions and units are to ensure that amenities and facilities in the workplace do not expose workers, students or visitors to health and safety risks. This includes:

- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the layout of the workplace, lighting and ventilation enables workers to carry out work without risks to health and safety
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision of adequate facilities for workers, including toilets, drinking water, washing and eating facilities
- manage risks associated with remote and isolated work
- prepare local area emergency response procedures
- implement risk control measures for any unsafe facilities or amenities within their responsibility to ensure the workplace is safe
- consult with workers on health and safety issues pertaining to facilities and amenities.

4.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for reporting any identified hazard in the work environment, facilities or amenities that they become aware of in accordance with University guidelines.

5 Needs Assessment

The work environment, facilities and amenities are provided for basic health and welfare of employees, students, contractors and visitors. These include items such as:

- toilets
- rest rooms
- shelter sheds
- seating
- dining rooms
- drinking water
- washing facilities
- change rooms
- lockers
- accommodation
- waste receptacles
- first aid facilities/rooms (refer to first aid guidelines).

This also includes factors such as workspace, temperature and air quality, lighting and flooring.

Design of the work environment, facilities and amenities need to take into account items 5.1 to 5.6 as well as relevant legislative, standards and code of practice requirements, and [FMD Design Standards](#).

5.1 Nature of Work Performed

The requirements of amenities and facilities will depend on the type of work being performed and the equipment being used. For example, persons handling chemicals or conducting hot and arduous activities may need to access shower and change room facilities. Persons working remotely may require shelter sheds, food and water.

5.2 Size and Location of the Work Area

Consideration should be given to the location such as the work area being in a building, remote area or outdoors. The work area may be multiple locations/sites over an extensive area. The workplace may not be in proximity to physical amenities.

5.3 The Composition of the Workforce

The workforce may be comprised of people of different sexes, religious beliefs and those people with special needs. This will influence the provision of amenities and facilities to accommodate the various needs.

5.4 Type of Workplace

Different requirements may need to be applied where the workplace is permanent or temporary. The workplace may be permanently fixed, mobile or even temporary based on one off work (promotional activities), seasonal work types, work involving one off situation with different duration (hours, days or weeks).

5.5 Access

Consideration should be given to the ability of a person to access the amenities and facilities. The means of access to the facility or amenities should be safe and accessible for all persons who require access.

5.6 Maintenance

The work environment, facilities and amenities are required to be maintained in a safe and healthy condition, and need to be hygienic, secure and in a serviceable condition. This includes replenishment of consumables, repair of broken or damaged furnishings and equipment and ensuing cleanliness of these areas.

UOW amenities are maintained according to the [Cleaning Service Guidelines](#) as a minimum standard for UOW buildings either on Wollongong Campus or other location.

6 Work Environment

6.1 Work Layout

The layout of the workplace is required to allow persons to enter and exit the workplace and move within safely, both under normal work conditions and in an emergency.

6.1.1 Entry and Exit

Entries and exits are required to be safe to allow impeded access and egress for all workers, students and visitors including those with special needs. In particular:

- entries and exits should be slip resistant under wet and dry conditions
- aisles and walkways need to be at least 600mm wide and kept free of furniture or other obstructions
- any walkways, boundaries or pathways shall be marked with 50mm wide with a contrasting colour e.g. white or yellow
- open sides of staircases should be guarded with an upper rail at 900mm or higher and a lower rail
- handrail should be provided on or at least one side of every staircase
- separate entry and exits for mobile equipment e.g. forklifts or trucks, and pedestrians are to be provided
- power operated doors and gates should have safety features to prevent people from being stuck or trapped.
- location of exits should be clearly marked and signs posted to show direction of exit doors to aid emergency evacuation.

6.1.2 Housekeeping

Untidy workplaces may lead to injuries e.g. slips and trips, therefore good housekeeping practices are essential for all workplaces. For example:

- spills on floors should be cleaned up immediately
- walkways should be kept clear of obstructions
- work materials should be neatly stored
- any waste should be regularly removed
- suitable containers for waste should be conveniently located and regularly emptied.

6.2 Work Areas

The layout of the work area should be designed to provide sufficient clear space between furniture, fixtures and fittings so workers can move freely without strain or injury also evacuate quickly in case of an emergency.

In determining how much space is required, the following should be considered:

- the physical actions needed to perform the task
- the need to move around while working
- whether the task is to be performed from a sitting or standing position
- access to workstations
- the equipment to be handled and the personal protective equipment that may be worn to perform the work.

- Environmental factors including heat or noise may require an increase to the space, as will work activities that involve manual tasks or the use of equipment.

6.3 Floors and Other Surfaces

Floor surfaces shall be suitable for the work area and be chosen based on the type of work being carried out at the workplace, as well as the materials used during the work process, the likelihood of spills and other contaminants, including dust and the need for cleaning.

In general:

- floors shall be free from slip or trip hazards e.g. cables, uneven edges, broken surfaces
- floor surfaces shall have sufficient grip to prevent slipping, especially in areas that may become wet or contaminated
- anti-fatigue matting, carpet, shock absorbent underlay, cushion backed vinyl shall be provided for workers where static standing occurs
- carpet shall be properly laid without loose edges or ripples and should be well maintained
- floors should be strong enough to support loads placed on them.

6.4 Workstations

Workstations should be designed so workers are comfortable undertaking their task and allow for a combination of sit and standing tasks. For tasks undertaken in a seated position, workers should be provided with seating that:

- provides good body support, especially for the lower back
- provides foot support, preferable with both feet flat on the floor, otherwise a footrest shall be provided
- allows adequate space for leg clearance and freedom of movement
- is fully adjustable to accommodate different size workers (e.g. seat height, back rest height and back rest tilt adjustments) and should not tip or slip utilising a five-point-base
- chairs shall be fitted with castors for carpeted surfaces and glides or braked castors on hard surfaces.

Workstations shall be designed and procured according to [FMD Design Standards](#) and Australian Standard 3590 Screen-based workstations - Visual display units.

Chairs are procured from Facilities Management Division.

6.5 Lighting

Sufficient lighting is required to allow safe movement around the workplace and to allow workers to perform their job without having to adopt awkward postures or strain their eyes to see. Emergency lighting is to be provided for the safe evacuation of people in the event of an emergency.

The following factors are to be taken into account:

- the nature of the work activity
- the nature of hazards and risks in the workplace
- the work environment
- illumination levels, including both natural and artificial light
- the transition of natural light over the day
- glare

- contrast
- reflections.

Measures to prevent low or excessive levels of lighting, glare or reflection include:

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

The following table outlines the recommended illumination standards:

Class of task	Recommended illuminance (lux)	Characteristics of the activity/interior	Examples of types of activities/interiors
Movement and orientation	40	For little-used interiors with visual tasks limited to moving around.	Corridors; cable tunnels; indoor storage tanks; walkways.
Rough intermittent	80	For interiors used intermittently, with visual tasks limited to movement, orientation and coarse detail.	Workers change and locker rooms; live storage of bulky materials; dead storage of materials needing care; loading bays.
Normal range of tasks and workplaces			
Simple	160	Continuously occupied interior with visual tasks (coarse detail only.) Occasional reading of clearly printed documents for short periods.	Waiting rooms; entrance halls; canteens; rough checking of stock; rough bench and machine work; general fabrication of structural steel; casting concrete; automated process monitoring; turbine halls.
Ordinary or moderately easy	240	Continuously occupied interiors with moderately easy visual tasks with high contrasts or large detail.	School boards and charts; medium woodworking; food preparation; counters for transactions; computer use.
Moderately difficult	320	Areas where visual tasks are moderately difficult with moderate detail or with low contrasts.	Routine office tasks (e.g. reading, writing, typing, enquiry desks.)
	400		Inspection of medium work; fine woodwork; enquiry points; car assembly.
Difficult	600	Areas where visual tasks are difficult with small detail or with low contrast.	Drawing boards; most inspection tasks; proofreading; fine machine work; fine painting and finishing; colour matching.
Very difficult	800	Areas where visual tasks are very difficult with very small detail or with very low contrast.	Fine inspection; plant retouching; fine manufacture; grading of dark materials; colour matching of dyes.

6.6 Air Quality

Workplaces are to be adequately ventilated which includes provision of fresh, clean air drawn from outside the workplace, uncontaminated from flues or other outlets and be circulated through the workplace.

Workplaces inside buildings may have natural ventilation, mechanical ventilation or air-conditioning. An air-conditioning system should:

- provide a comfortable environment in relation to air temperature, humidity and air movement
- prevent the excessive accumulation of odours
- reduce the levels of respiratory by-products, especially carbon dioxide, and other indoor contaminants that may arise from work activities
- supply an amount of fresh air to the workplace, exhaust some of the stale air as well as filter and recirculate some of the indoor air.

Natural ventilation should consist of permanent openings, including windows and doors, that:

- in total are the size of at least five per cent of the floor area of the room
- are open to the sky, an open covered area or an appropriately ventilated adjoining room.

Natural ventilation may be assisted by mechanical ventilation.

Enclosed workplaces should be supplied with comfortable rates of air movement (usually between 0.1 m and 0.2 m per second).

Air-conditioning and other ventilation systems should be regularly serviced and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Cooling towers that form part of many air-conditioning systems are to be inspected, tested and treated as per legislative requirements. Further information is available in the [Managing the Risk of Plant Guidelines](#).

Work processes that release harmful levels of airborne contaminants (e.g. lead fumes, acid mist, solvent vapour) are to be undertaken with specific control measures in place to remove them at the source, e.g. fume cupboards. Refer to the [Working With Hazardous Chemicals Guidelines](#) for further information regarding monitoring of hazardous chemicals.

6.7 Heat and Cold

Refer to the [Thermal Comfort Guidelines](#) for further information on managing health and safety risks associated to hot and cold environments.

7 Welfare Facilities

7.1 Access

Workers, including those who have particular needs or disabilities, must have access to the facilities provided. Workers are to be provided with:

- adequate breaks to use the facilities
- facilities which are within a reasonable distance from the work area
- shift workers have similar access to those who work during the day
- a means of access which is safe.

7.2 Drinking Water

Free potable drinking water which is cool, clean and palatable is required at each place of work. The supply of drinking water should be:

- positioned where it can be easily accessed by workers
- close to where hot or strenuous work is being undertaken to reduce the likelihood of dehydration or heat stress
- separate from toilet or washing facilities to avoid contamination of the drinking water
- below 24 degrees Celsius
- supplied in a hygienic manner e.g. upward jet fountain, via disposable or washable drinking containers.

Non-drinking water should be marked accordingly.

7.3 Toilets

Access to clean toilets must be provided for all workers while they are at work. The number and specification of toilets for University buildings is set out by the National Construction Code of Australia. Further information is available in the [Code of Practice: Managing the Work Environment](#).

7.4 Hand Washing

Hand washing facilities are to be provided to enable workers to maintain good standards of personal hygiene. As a guide hand washing basins should be provided in a ratio of 1 per every 30 workers or part thereof.

Paper towels, continuous roll towel or hot air dryers are to be supplied with hand washing facilities, as well as appropriate soap, cleaning agents and waste receptacles.

7.5 Dining Facilities

Where work processes may cause risk to health, a separate eating area protected from dust, fumes or noise arising out of the work process is to be available. The area should be suitable for dining, have access to a refrigerator, enable easy cleaning and kept free of tool, materials, and vehicles and be protected from the weather.

7.6 Personal Storage

Accessible and secure storage should be provided at the workplace for personal items belonging to workers. This storage should be separate from that provided for personal protective equipment in cases where contamination is possible.

7.7 Change Rooms

Persons required to change clothes before and after work should be able to access a change room. This includes workers who need to:

- wear personal protective clothing or uniforms while they are working
- leave their work clothing at the workplace.

It should be private and contain lockers for storage of personal belongings. The door should also be capable of being locked.

Separate change rooms for males and females must be provided. The changing room space should allow a clear space of at least 0.5m² for each worker.

7.8 Shower Facilities

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

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

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

7.9 Shelter Facilities

Where persons are required to be performing tasks offsite and can be exposed to environment elements appropriate shelter is to be provided.

8 Inspection and Monitoring

The work environment, facilities and amenities need to be periodically inspected to ensure they conform to relevant legislation, standards and codes of practice and are maintained and serviced appropriately.

University amenities e.g. toilets, kitchens and washrooms shall be inspected and maintained according to the [Cleaning Service Guideline](#) and the [Workplace Safety Inspection Guidelines](#).

Any non-conformances identified throughout the inspection require a risk control assigned to an appropriate person. This is required to be recorded through the online hazard reporting system, SafetyNet.

Review of the work environment, facilities and amenities are required when:

- work practices, equipment or workplaces are modified
- employees numbers increase
- new work processes are introduced
- an incident impacting on the health, safety or welfare of employees occurs.

Where it is identified that the workplace environment, facilities or amenities pose a health and safety risk, the issue should be reported to the supervisor and recorded in SafetyNet. Corrective actions may include a review of the area in relation to the information contained in this guideline, WHS Regulation, Code of Practice or other information.

9 Program Evaluation

In order to ensure that these guidelines continue to be effective and applicable to the university, they will be reviewed regularly by the WHS unit in consultation with the WHS Committee. Conditions which might warrant a review of the guidelines on a more frequent basis would include:

- reported hazards or injuries
- non-conforming systems
- WHS committee concern.

Following the completion of any review, the program will be revised/updated in order to correct any deficiencies. These changes will be communicated via the WHS committee.

10 Related Documents

- [Risk Management Guidelines](#)
- [Workplace Safety Inspection Guidelines](#)
- [Field Activities Guidelines](#)
- [Thermal Comfort Guidelines](#)
- [First Aid Guidelines](#)
- [Waste Disposal Guidelines](#)
- [Design Standards, Facilities Management Division](#)
- [Cleaning Service Guideline \(Wollongong Campus\), Facilities Management Division](#)
- [Environmental Management System, Facilities Management Division](#)

11 Reference Documents

- [NSW WHS Act 2011](#)
- [NSW WHS Regulation 2011](#)
- [Managing the work environment and facilities: Code of practice SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Building Code of Australia](#)

12 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	August 2009	Manager WHS	New document created.
2	August 2010	Manager WHS	Document updated to incorporate the Personnel name change to Human Resources Division.
3	March 2012	Manager WHS	Rebrand.
4	September 2012	Manager WHS	Scheduled Review - updated to include requirements from Code of Practice Work Environment. Change of Title.
5	March 2013	Manager WHS	Minor review.
6	April 2016	Manager WHS	Scheduled review – minor changes, rebrand.
7	July 2016	Manager WHS	Minor changes.