



Health & Safety Supervision of Students in Workshops, Laboratories and Studios

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¹ or earlier if change in legislation or on risk assessment

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Policy Summary

The policy of Edinburgh Napier University is to provide and maintain safe working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all staff, students and others, and to provide such resources, information, training and supervision as required for this purpose.

Students working in a laboratory, workshop or studio area on their own or as part of a class or research project group will require a certain level of supervision from designated staff.

This level of supervision will depend on:

- The nature of the processes and activities to be undertaken
- The degree of potential risk involved, including any hazardous substances and/or machinery or equipment being used
- The level of experience and competence of the student(s) involved
- An assessment based upon the physical layout of the facilities e.g. any dangerous equipment in the area
- An assessment based on the remoteness of the work activity taking place in relation to accessing assistance in the event of an emergency

This policy applies to all university staff who have responsibility for the supervision of students in a practical teaching and/or research environment.

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1. Supervision of Students During Undergraduate Practical Classes

Any activities taking place in laboratories, workshops or studios must be risk assessed prior to work taking place. Laboratories, workshops or studio workspace room risk assessments must also be in place and the workspace must be health and safety compliant for the activities taking place. ([Risk Assessment Form](#))

During undergraduate practical classes taking place in laboratories, workshops or studio areas, the health and safety of students is the prime responsibility of the member of teaching staff timetabled to be in charge (supplemented by other appropriate members of staff) and such responsibility will involve proper adherence to accepted health and safety standards.

The nature and extent of the levels of supervision required to discharge this responsibility will depend on a risk assessment of the following:

- The degree of potential hazards involved in the work
- The competence/experience of the students
- The number of students working in a specified work area
- The number of different activities taking place in a specified work area

The school must make an assessment regarding the level of supervision required. The role of the Dean of School is to ensure adequate arrangements are in place with regard to the supervision of students.

Academic staff and, in some circumstances specified by the Dean of School, technical staff or other support staff are responsible for ensuring that students are provided with detailed safety instructions of the hazards and risks associated with the work undertaken in practical classes including when working away from the university e.g. fieldwork.

Depending on student numbers and the level of risk involved, the main academic lead may require additional support from other members of staff. These other staff members can include:

- Technical staff
- Postgraduate research student demonstrators
- Other academic members of staff including teaching associates and skills tutors

Responsibilities for these staff members can include:

- Demonstration and supervision of students carrying out practical workplace activities
- Demonstration and supervision of students using equipment or machinery
- Ensuring that anybody working in the laboratory/workshop understands and is following:
 - Safe working practices
 - Safe handling of hazardous substances
 - Safe and correct use of equipment/machinery etc.

Staff and students working in laboratories, workshops or studios must have appropriate training and be aware of how to deal with:

- Any spillages
- Any waste material (and how to safely dispose of it)
- Understand what to do if there is an incident, accident or near miss and know how to summon assistance and be able to report any issues or incidents

2. Supervision of Students During Undergraduate Project Work

Before any project work begins all undergraduate students must have received a laboratory, workshop or studio orientation induction covering all aspects of health and safety. They should also have been introduced to key staff working in the area.

Students need to be informed of the following:

- Any potential hazards that might arise during the work (other than those which the student should reasonably be expected to anticipate).
- Any fire or emergency procedures e.g. fire exits, emergency assembly points, how to summon assistance, first aiders etc.
- Any specific safety training required and this should be recorded by the school on completion.
- All safety documentation available such as Safe Systems of Work, Standard Operating Procedures, Risk and COSHH assessments etc.
- If no Risk or COSHH assessment is in place for the work being carried out then the student should be given support to create their own:
 - The student may have completed risk assessment training and be competent in writing their own assessment (this should be checked by supervisory staff).
 - If the student has no experience in writing a Risk or COSHH Assessment then a member of staff should complete the form but ensure that the student has read and understood it.
- Any recommended control measures available including the use of any personal protective equipment (PPE).
- PPE required must be:
 - Provided for the student
 - Suitable for the activity taking place
 - Fit the student properly
 - Be used correctly by the student.
- Any PPE supplied by the school must have been maintained and be in good working order.
- The importance of reporting all incidents, accidents or near misses to senior technician/supervisor/member of staff.
- The importance of reporting any safety issues such as damaged PPE or broken or damaged items of equipment.

It is essential that any student who has health issues which may be affected by the work taking place or from wearing/using PPE (allergies to gloves etc.), must disclose this information at the beginning of any project work taking place. Supervisors should check this prior to any work starting and create a personal risk assessment for the student with control measures and/or alternative work processes in place should they be required. This can be done through the assistance of the School Safety Co-ordinator or the Health & Safety Team.

Project supervisors are not expected to be present in the laboratory or workshop at all times, or to be able to control people's behaviour, however supervisors/technical staff/member of staff in charge of the area are responsible for ensuring that:

- An effective laboratory/workshop safety programme is implemented.
- Safety expectations and any safety guidance has been communicated to new workers including project students.

- Students have been trained on the use of any equipment or machinery they may be required to use as part of their project.
- Staff and students have been trained on working with hazardous substances including safe handling, storage and disposal.

For undergraduate students working on research projects, supervision can be described as one of the following:

- **Direct supervision** – this means that the principal investigator or other designated member of academic staff is present when students are working in the laboratory, workshop or studio area.
- **Indirect supervision** - means a qualified supervisor, such as the principal investigator or other designated member of academic staff, is present and available onsite which may be in the same or adjacent building but not necessarily within the laboratory, workshop or studio area.
- **Qualified supervisor** – a member of academic staff, technical staff or postgraduate student, trained in and knowledgeable about the specific hazards and work activities taking place, is present in the laboratory, workshop or studio area.

The level of supervision will differ dependent on the location and the activity taking place. Any student working in a laboratory or workshop classified as higher risk (where hazardous substances are present, higher risk machinery or equipment is being used) must receive information, training and supervision appropriate for the work undertaken, so that risks to the health and safety of all persons involved are controlled.

An area that is classified as higher risk will be identified in a workspace room risk assessment carried out prior to any work taking place. This should be made available to staff working in the area via SharePoint and disseminated down to students prior to any work starting.

Higher risk areas such as laboratories, workshops or studios which contain machinery or equipment that is classified as higher risk or where the work involves hazardous substances:

- Undergraduate students must be supervised at all times by a member of academic staff, a postgraduate student demonstrator or technical staff.

Lower risk areas - these can be laboratories, workshops or studios that contain machinery or equipment that has been assessed as low risk or areas where there are no hazardous substances present, or substances are present but classified as lower risk:

- Undergraduate students may work with remote supervision from a member of academic staff and/or technical staff that are in close proximity to the area*.

*This is on condition that occasional checks take place and only if any students working have been made aware of emergency procedures and how to call for help and assistance. Occasional checks should be proportionate to the risks associated with the activity and be based around the risk assessment findings.

Note – A person who is experienced in working in areas classified as higher risk may feel more confident than someone with less experience. Supervisors should be aware of this especially if students have little or no workplace experience and supervision should reflect this. Any training given should be evidenced and recorded.

3. Supervision of Students During Taught Postgraduate Practical Sessions

Any activities taking place in laboratories, workshops or studios must be risk assessed prior to work being carried out. Laboratories, workshops or studio workspace room risk assessments must also be in place and the workspace must be health and safety compliant for the activities taking place. ([Risk Assessment Form](#))

During taught postgraduate practical classes taking place in laboratories, workshops or studio areas, the health and safety of students is the prime responsibility of the member of teaching staff timetabled to be in charge (supplemented by other appropriate members of staff) and such responsibility will involve proper adherence to accepted health and safety standards.

The nature and extent of the levels of supervision required to discharge this responsibility will depend on a risk assessment of the following:

- The degree of potential hazards involved in the work
- The competence/experience of the students
- The number of students working in a specified work area
- The number of different activities taking place in a specified work area

The school must make an assessment regarding the level of supervision required.

Depending on student numbers and the level of risk involved, the main academic lead may require additional support from other members of staff. These other staff members can include:

- Technical staff
- Postgraduate research student demonstrators
- Other academic members of staff including teaching associates and skills tutors

Responsibilities for these staff members can include:

- Demonstration and supervision of students carrying out practical workplace activities
- Demonstration and supervision of students using equipment or machinery
- Ensuring that anybody working in the laboratory/workshop understands and is following:
 - Safe working practices
 - Safe handling of hazardous substances
 - Safe and correct use of equipment/machinery etc.

Staff and students working in laboratories, workshops or studios must have appropriate training and be aware of how to deal with:

- Any spillages
- Any waste material (and how to safely dispose of it)
- Understand what to do if there is an incident, accident or near miss and know how to summon assistance and be able to report any issues or incidents to a designated member of staff
- All training carried out by school staff for students should be recorded and signed off

4. Supervision of Students During Postgraduate Research

It would be wrong to assume that postgraduate students are more experienced in working in laboratories, workshops or studios thus requiring less supervision. Depending on the type of workspace being used and the activity taking place the student may have little or no experience. Therefore, it is essential that a laboratory, workshop or studio orientation induction takes place even if the student has received a similar induction previously either at Edinburgh Napier University or at another institution.

These safety inductions are mandatory and attendance should be recorded by the school to ensure they have been carried out. The induction should include all aspects of health and safety associated with the workspace and any relevant activities taking place.

Postgraduate students also need to be informed of the following:

- Any potential hazards that might arise during the work (other than those which the student should reasonably be expected to anticipate).
- Any fire or emergency procedures e.g. fire exits, emergency assembly points, how to summon assistance, first aiders etc.
- Any specific safety training required and this should be recorded by the school on completion.
- All safety documentation available such as Safe Systems of Work, Standard Operating Procedures, Risk and COSHH Assessments etc.
- If no Risk or COSHH Assessment is in place for the work being carried out then the student should be given support to create their own:
 - The student may have completed risk assessment training and be competent in writing their own assessment (this should be checked by supervisory staff).
 - If the student has no experience in writing a Risk or COSHH Assessment, then a member of staff should complete the form but ensure that the student has read and understood it.
- Any recommended control measures available including the use of any personal protective equipment (PPE).
- PPE required must be:
 - Provided for the student
 - Suitable for the activity taking place
 - Fit the student properly
 - Be used correctly by the student.
- Any PPE supplied by the school must have been maintained and be in good working order.
- How to report any defects in equipment or processes so problems can be sorted quickly.
- The importance of reporting all incidents, accidents or near misses to the senior technician/supervisor.

For postgraduate students working on research projects, supervision can be described as one of the following:

- **Direct supervision** – this means that the principal investigator or other designated member of academic staff is present when students are working in the laboratory, workshop or studio area.
- **Indirect supervision** - means a qualified supervisor, such as the principal investigator or other designated member of academic staff, is present and available onsite which may be in the same or adjacent building but not necessarily within the laboratory, workshop or studio area.

- **Qualified supervisor** – a member of academic staff, technical staff or postgraduate student, trained in and knowledgeable about the specific hazards and work activities taking place, is present in the laboratory, workshop or studio area.

The level of supervision will differ dependent on the location and the activity taking place. Any student working in a laboratory or workshop classified as higher risk (where hazardous substances are present, higher risk machinery or equipment is being used) must receive information, training and supervision appropriate for the work undertaken, so that risks to the health and safety of all persons involved are controlled.

An area that is classified as higher risk will be identified in a workspace room risk assessment carried out prior to any work taking place. This should be made available to staff working in the area via SharePoint and disseminated down to students prior to any work starting.

Higher risk areas such as laboratories, workshops or studios which contain machinery or equipment that is classified as higher risk or where the work involves hazardous substances:

- Postgraduate research students may work with remote supervision from academic staff (supplemented by technical staff).

Lower risk areas - these can be laboratories, workshops or studios that contain machinery or equipment that has been assessed as low risk or areas where there are no hazardous substances present, or substances are present but classified as lower risk:

- Postgraduate research students may work unsupervised*.

*This is on condition that occasional checks take place and only if any students working have been made aware of emergency procedures and how to call for help and assistance. Occasional checks should be proportionate to the risks associated with the activity and be based around the risk assessment findings.

5. School Responsibilities

School responsibilities include:

- Ensuring staff and students receive documented general and laboratory, workshop or studio specific training. Mandatory safety inductions must be in place for students working in laboratories, workshops or studios and these should be recorded by the school.
- Developing and communicating written safety procedures that address hazards associated with laboratory, workshop and studio specific operations.
- Ensuring that safety equipment and PPE is available, in proper working order, and appropriate for the work being carried out.
- Ensuring that first aid provision is in place and that staff and students understand how to summon a first aider should one be required.
- Ensuring that any vulnerable students (or anybody working who has an underlying health condition which may affect how they carry out tasks) are given assistance where required.
- Implementing and enforcing preventative measures to control hazards and minimise risks, including complying with regulations, university and departmental safety policies and prudent laboratory/workshop/studio safety practices.
- Maintaining compliance with environmental regulations, to include proper management of hazardous waste.

- Ensuring the hazardous database is updated for all new chemical purchases and that any hazardous database users are kept up to date by the school. Any changes in staff personnel requiring access to the database should be directed to the Health & Safety Team who manage the system.

6. Supervisor's Responsibilities

Supervisor (principal investigator, designated academic staff member, technician) responsibilities include:

- Communicating hazard information and safe working practices to students.
- Providing supervision of personnel commensurate with the education, experience and competence of personnel.
- Setting a good example and enforcing safe work practices.
- During an extended absence, arranging for a qualified alternative to provide supervision of laboratory, workshop or studio operations.
- Taking active steps to identify laboratory, workshop or studio safety deficiencies and ensure remediation.
- Communication of safe disposal procedures of any waste materials prior to any work commencing in the laboratory, workshop or studio.
- Ensuring any incidents, accidents, dangerous occurrences, near misses or illnesses (or anybody feeling ill or unwell) in laboratories, workshops or studios are reported to Health and Safety using the [incident reporting form](#).
- Ensuring laboratories, workshops or studios are adjusted or modified for any vulnerable persons or persons with conditions that can affect how tasks are carried out e.g. adjustable benches available for wheelchair users etc., where reasonably practicable.

Some laboratories or workshop areas will have equipment and machinery which requires specialised training before use. This should be highlighted to students by staff in the area, by clear, visible signage or via the risk assessment. Training is required in order to protect the user as well as the equipment. Any training carried out should be recorded by the school.

Any students requiring using this type of equipment will need:

- A full demonstration on the use of the equipment including any safety control measures such as safety guards, emergency off switches, PPE required etc.
- Full supervision by a trained member of staff when using the equipment*.
- Access to Risk and COSHH Assessments, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Safe Systems of Work etc. where relevant, which should be available via SharePoint or Moodle.

*Full supervision should be in place the first few times the student uses the equipment. This may be relaxed as the student becomes more competent, but this should be at the discretion of the trained user of the equipment and dependent on the level of risk involved.

7. Other areas

7.1. Fieldwork as part of a practical class

Undergraduate classes carrying out fieldwork practical classes should have a designated supervisor with them at all times. The responsibility for this supervision would be by the member of teaching staff timetabled to be in charge of the class.

This can be supplemented dependent on location, number of students etc. by:

- Other designated members of academic staff
- Technical staff
- Postgraduate research staff/students

Any student fieldwork classes must have a full risk assessment in place prior to any work starting and all necessary safety precautions in place including:

- A safe ratio number of students to staff – this is dependent on the activity taking place, remoteness of location, number of students etc.
- An up-to-date weather forecast of the area.
- Communication of any specialised clothing that the student needs to supply themselves e.g. warm clothes, waterproofs, walking shoes etc.
- Any PPE supplied is available, in proper working order and appropriate for the work being conducted.

7.2. Fieldwork as part of a research project

Where a student is undertaking fieldwork as part of a research project it is the responsibility, prior to the start of the project, of the principal investigator to communicate to the student:

- Any potential hazards that might arise during the work (other than those which the student should reasonably be expected to anticipate)
- Safe Systems of Work, Risk Assessments etc. that are required
- Any protective equipment/clothing (PPE) that may be required
- All necessary controls are in place prior to undertaking tasks. If not in place then the work should stop

The supervisor must have the following information:

- Location details of where the student is working
- Dates and times of when the student is working
- Contact details (mobile phone number) of the student

The student must have the following information:

- Contact details (mobile phone number) of the supervisor and any university emergency contact phone numbers
- Details of any local emergency services e.g. location of nearest A&E hospital, emergency phone numbers etc.
- Any other emergency procedures relating to the study or pertinent to the area they are working in

Dependent on location/time of activity, it may be recommended that the student should not work alone and will be required to have an appropriate person accompanying them during their fieldwork (Buddy system). This can be a fellow classmate, family member or friend recruited to attend the fieldwork project with the student.

7.3. Other areas on campus or at other institutions

Where students are present in situations other than those under the control of a supervisor, e.g. library, refectory, study areas etc., the responsibility for their health and safety lies with the manager of that area of activity. Students must be made aware of this.

When working away from the university at other institutions it is the responsibility of the student to ensure they understand the rules and regulations and follow any safety guidelines in place. Supervision should be an agreement made in advance between Edinburgh Napier University and relevant staff at the other institution. Risk assessments, either from Edinburgh Napier University or from the other institution, must be in place before the commencement of any work.