

HS32 Noise | Standard Operating Procedure

1. Background information

1.1. Introduction/Purpose

1.1.1. Noise at work can cause hearing loss that can be temporary or permanent. People often experience temporary deafness after leaving a noisy place.

1.1.2. Although hearing recovers within a few hours, this should not be ignored. It is a sign that if an individual continues to be exposed to the noise then their hearing could be permanently damaged.

1.1.3. Permanent hearing damage can be caused immediately by sudden, extremely loud, explosive noises.

1.1.4. The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 imposes duties on the University to protect employees who may be exposed to noise.

1.1.5. This guidance outlines measures that need to be in place to protect employees, including assessing the risks and taking measures to reduce noise exposure.

1.1.6. Providing training and information for employees on the risks from noise and the measures in place to reduce these and providing health surveillance where the risk assessment shows that this is appropriate.

1.2. Scope

1.2.1. The aim of this guidance is to ensure that all SOAS schools/services have a management system in place to protect employees from excessive noise at their place of work, which could cause them to lose their hearing and/or suffer from tinnitus.

1.2.2. This guidance note does not cover the environmental aspects of noise and noise pollution or the adverse effects on wellbeing which can arise from 'nuisance' noise.

1.3. Roles and Responsibilities

1.3.1. A risk assessment A risk assessment must be undertaken to help decide what needs to be done to ensure the health and safety of SOAS employees who are exposed to noise. It is more than just taking measurements of noise – sometimes measurements may not even be necessary. (See risk assessment guidelines in section 3).

2. Main Content

2.1. Risk Assessment Guidelines

2.1.1. The University's risk assessment will:

- Identify where there may be a risk from noise and who is likely to be affected;
- contain a reliable estimate of employees' exposures, and compare the exposure with the exposure action values and limit values;
- identify what you need to do to comply with the law, eg whether noise-control measures or hearing protection are needed, and, if so, where and what type; and
- identify any employees who need to be provided with health surveillance and whether any are at particular risk.

2.2. Estimating Employees' Exposure

2.2.1. SOAS has a duty to estimate employees' exposure to noise. It is essential that the estimate is representative of the work the employee undertakes. The estimate must take into account:

- The work they do or are likely to do;
- the ways in which they do the work; and
- how it might vary from one day to the next.

2.2.2. Estimates must be based on reliable information, eg measurements in the employee's workplace.. information from other workplaces similar to yours, or data from suppliers of machinery.

2.2.3. The findings of the risk assessment must be recorded. Action plans must be used to identify anything necessary to comply with the law. The action plan must set out what has been done and what will be done to address the issue and include a timetable that names who will be responsible for the work

2.2.4. SOAS will review the risk assessment if circumstances in the workplace change and affect noise exposure. Further regular reviews will be conducted to ensure that all that is reasonably practicable is done to control the noise risk. Even when it appears that nothing has changed, the university will not go longer than two years without checking whether a review is needed.

2.3. Noise Exposure Calculators

2.3.1. Competence - SOAS university will ensure that the risk assessment:

- has been drawn up by someone who is competent to carry out the task; and
- is based on advice and information from people who are competent to provide it.

2.4. Managing Noise Risks

2.4.1. Guidance for assessing the risks

- Identify noise hazards.
- Identify workers at particular risk from exposure to noise.
- Estimate likely exposure to noise.
- Identify measures required to eliminate or reduce risks.

- Make a record of actions taken and planned.

2.4.2. Guidance to eliminate or control noise risks

- Eliminate or reduce risks using good practice and known control and management solutions.
- Obtain quieter tools and machinery.
- For the higher-risk areas, plan and put in place technical and organisational control measures.
- Make sure the legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded.

2.4.3. Guidance on hearing protection

- Where there remains a risk, issue your employees with hearing protection
- Make use mandatory for high-risk cases and manage use with hearing protection zones.
- Remember that hearing protection is not an alternative to noise control.
- Employees must use hearing protection where its use is mandatory.

2.4.4. Guidance for maintaining and using noise control equipment

- Ensure that any noise-control equipment and hearing protection are maintained.
- Ensure that anything supplied is fully and properly used.
- Employees must use the controls provided and report any defects.

2.4.5. Guidance for health surveillance

- Provide health surveillance (including hearing checks) for those at risk.
- Use the results to review controls and further protect individuals.
- Employees should co-operate and attend hearing checks.

2.4.6. Guidance for worker information and training

- The university should give employees information, instruction and training on:
 - The risks and safe working practices;
 - control measures, hearing protection and health surveillance; and
 - should encourage workers to take part in consultations in assessments.

2.4.7. Guidance on reviewing the policy

- Monitor the workplace for changes that affect noise exposure.

- Monitor grouped health surveillance results to identify where controls are failing.
- Look out for new ways to reduce risks.

Document History

Version	Published	Owner	Status	Review Date / Schedule	Notes / Changes
V1	Feb 23	Estates and Property Services	Approved by Health & Safety Committee – Feb 23	Annual review or when dictated by incident or legislation.	First Issue