

## GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF PLACEMENTS

Placement organisations have the primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of participants during their placements. Monash University also has a responsibility to ensure the suitability of placements and needs to be sure that placements meet appropriate standards of health and safety and that placement organisations know about their health and safety duties.

The placement organisation's health and safety policies, procedures and arrangements should be based on a risk management approach.

The placement organiser should ensure that the following issues have been addressed:

- The placement organisation has nominated someone to have overall responsibility for the placement participants.
- The placement organisation has agreed to give placement participants appropriate supervision at all times and to provide them with training in health and safety issues associated with the placement.
- Risk management has been applied to placement tasks and that the risk assessments are available to placement participants.
- The placement organisation has confirmed that there are procedures to deal with accidents and emergencies that may arise.
- First aid equipment is provided and records of first aid treatments are kept.
- Trained first aiders are available.
- The placement organisation understands that all accidents to students and staff members, however minor, must be reported to the placement organiser.
- The placement organisation has confirmed that they have current public liability insurance.

After discussing these and related issues, the placement organiser should be able to assess the placement organisation's general approach to OHS and make a judgement about the placement's overall suitability.

### Assessment of the workplace

An essential part of the initial visit to the placement organisation should be a brief walk around the workplace. This provides an opportunity to look at general conditions in the areas where placement participants will be working.

#### *General overview*

Useful indicators of appropriate attention to OHS are:

- General standard of housekeeping
  - Are there clear passageways?
  - Is the workplace clean?
  - Are stairways or doorways clear of stored materials?
- General provisions
  - Is the workplace brightly lit?
  - Where work is done sitting down, are suitable seats provided?

- Fire precautions
  - Are there any fire extinguishers?
  - Is there a system for checking them?
  - Are fire exits clearly marked and not obviously obstructed?
  - Are clear fire instructions displayed?
- Electrical safety
  - Is electric wiring in good condition? (Loose, bare, dusty and disorganised wires or broken plugs or switches indicate an unsafe electrical system).
- Welfare facilities
  - Are toilets and washing facilities adequate and kept clean?
  - Are change rooms and dining facilities provided?
  - Are any health and safety information posters displayed?

### *Specific issues*

Placement organisers should look at the specific work to be done by the student or staff member where possible. They could usefully ask:

- to see risk assessments of the work to be undertaken;
- about the health risks associated with the work;
- about personal protective equipment;
- about the extent of training provided in its use;
- about the hours of work.

### *Health issues*

Placement organisers should also enquire about any health-based limitations on the type of person who may be appropriate for the placement. Placement organisations have a duty to assess the capabilities of their employees (which includes placement participants) in health and safety terms.

There may, for example, be operations involving possible exposure to sensitising agents that would not be appropriate to participants with asthma. Another example might be a warehouse where there is a significant amount of works transport (lift trucks, etc.). In such a workplace a partially sighted participant, or one with significant impairment of hearing, may need particularly careful supervision.

### *Placement participants with disabilities*

Where special arrangements are needed for students with disabilities, placement organisers should ensure that placement organisations are given full information, and any necessary advice, well in advance of the placement.

### *Legal issues*

Finally, placement organisers should ensure that participants' tasks will not involve any activities that are prohibited by law. Where there is any doubt about this, contact OH&S for guidance.