



COVID-19 Return to Campus Risk Assessment Guidance

Developed by the University Safety Service
September 2021

Understanding the spread and control of COVID-19

Understanding how COVID-19 is spread and how control measures work is key to preventing an infection occurring.

There are two main ways in which coronavirus can be spread:

- From contaminated surfaces i.e. when an individual touches the surface with their hands and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth;
- From contaminated respiratory droplets released by individuals who are currently infectious i.e. when someone coughs, sneezes or blows their nose.

Respiratory droplets are not airborne for long and this is the reason for the Government's emphasis on social distancing involving people not coming within 2m of each other.

By protecting the potential routes of entry into the body by social distancing, good personal hygiene practices and cleaning regimes, the potential for infection can be effectively minimised.

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

A risk assessment must be completed prior to staff returning to work on campus which addresses how the transmission of the COVID-19 virus in the workplace will be restricted.

This essentially involves planning how work can be undertaken whilst following the government guidance on vulnerable individuals and social distancing.

The link below provides clarification on who is classified as a vulnerable individual:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

As with most risks, the hierarchy of control should be used to reduce the risk from COVID-19.

Eliminate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate home working wherever possible – staff whose role does not involve or support the direct provision of services to students or research, and who can work remotely, should continue to do so. Emphasise STAY AT HOME message if staff, students or anyone in their household have symptoms of COVID-19. Staff / students encouraged to take up the COVID-19 Vaccination. Staff / students receiving a positive result from lateral flow test on campus to return home to isolate. Staff advised to avoid using public transport to commute, where possible. Rearrange tasks to enable them to be carried out by one person, or by maintaining social distancing measures. Arrange facilities to maintain social distancing. Eliminate face to face meetings where possible.
Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff / students advised to undertake a lateral flow test and to have received a negative result prior to coming on campus. Stairs should be used in preference to lifts and, where possible, one-way systems should be followed. Minimise numbers on site with flexibility in starting / finishing times, week in / week out. Minimise the time staff are in close proximity to others by considering one-way systems, screens and dwell time between tasks. Minimise the frequency and time staff are within 1m of each other. Consider alternative or additional controls to reduce staff interface i.e. perspex screens at reception areas or areas where there are a large number of interactions. Increase cleaning regimes / regularly clean common touchpoints, doors, lift buttons, handles, tools, shared equipment etc. Introduce additional hand wash / sanitising gel stations and encourage staff to wash / apply gel to hands on entering and leaving their building. Make cleaning materials available in all areas for staff to use. Staff to minimise travel between buildings. Rooms should be well ventilated / windows opened to allow fresh air to circulate / increase ventilation in enclosed spaces. Information on arrangements to be communicated to all contractors and any essential visitors to site. First Aiders to be provided with additional advice, training and equipment where necessary.
Isolate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange staff in fixed teams to minimise range of contacts. Arrange the workplace so that staff are away from others as much as possible. Stagger break times and demarcate safe locations in rest areas.
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where face to face working is essential for staff, a specific risk assessment must be undertaken and this activity kept to 15 minutes or less where possible, with the minimal number of staff involved. Provide additional supervision to monitor and manage compliance. Liaison with embedded companies on arrangements. Line managers / Schools / Trade Unions to encourage staff and students to use the on campus testing centre and take up the COVID-19 vaccination.
Personal Protective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should not be used as an alternative to social distancing, except where there is no other practical solution.

Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on use of face coverings made available to staff. • Roles where additional PPE is now required to be identified i.e. First Aider. • Where close proximity working is required for longer than 15 minutes, assess the need to issue staff with PPE.
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff behaviour and co-operation is the key to implementing all of the controls. • Undertake induction training to inform staff of the changes. • Include representatives from all cohorts of staff in working groups setting up, monitoring and developing arrangements. • Encourage an open and collaborative approach between staff. • Trial suggestions before implementing them fully. • Senior management to be actively involved in monitoring compliance and effectiveness of arrangements, as enforcement of controls is essential. • Seek feedback and regularly review risk assessments. • Make changes which are sustainable in the medium term.

Please note, where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

School/Department/Unit:	Work activity:	
Assessment completed by:	Date completed:	Review Period:

COVID-19 is a new illness caused by a virus (Coronavirus) which can affect your lungs and airways. Symptoms can be mild, moderate, severe or fatal.

This is a **Generic Risk Assessment** for dealing with the current COVID-19 situation in the workplace. It is unlikely to cover all workplace scenarios, therefore **each School / Directorate / Unit must consider their own unique circumstances** and adapt the arrangements to address their own activities at a local level.

Who might be harmed – Staff, Students, Visitors to the premises, Cleaners, Contractors, Drivers, Vulnerable Groups (Elderly, Pregnant workers, those with existing underlying health conditions) and anyone else who physically comes in contact with you in relation to your business.

Before returning to work - staff will be expected to complete the on line 'Returning to Campus Induction training module'. This will be mandatory for all staff returning or currently on Campus.

Risk Area	Existing Control Measures (What are you already doing?)	Severity (1-5)*	Likelihood (1-4)*	Risk Level* (L,M,H, VH)	What further action is necessary	Severity (1-5)*	Likelihood (1-4)*	Final risk level*	Action by whom & by when
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1. Staff working from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University has developed a Phasing Back to Campus Pathway which sets out the approach regarding staff returning to campus. The current position is that where staff can work from home, they should continue to do so. Essential workers will be prioritised for on campus work at each stage of the pathway. Where presence is required, this has been discussed with their Line Manager in accordance with HR Return to Campus guidance. Line Managers will keep in touch with off-site staff on their working arrangements, including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				
2. Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management will promote mental health and wellbeing awareness to staff during the Coronavirus outbreak and will offer whatever support they can to help. 				Regular communication of mental health information and open door policy for those who need additional support.				
3. COVID-19 Return to Work induction training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated training completed online prior to return to work. Clear, consistent, and regular communication provided to improve understanding and consistency. Engagement with staff and staff representatives. Discussions with staff on a one-to-one basis. 				Monitor and review to ensure that induction training is completed.				

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4. Spread of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff / students made aware that they must self-assess their symptoms daily and should not come into work if they or anyone in their household have any COVID-19 symptoms. • All staff / students encouraged to download the HSC NI StopCOVID NI Proximity app. • All staff / students advised to undertake a lateral flow test and to have received a negative result prior to coming on campus. • Staff / students required to work continuously on campus advised to undertake lateral flow tests twice per week (every 3 – 7 days). • Staff / students advised to take up the COVID-19 vaccination. • Visitors to the workplace asked to complete a health self-declaration. • If anyone in the workplace becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, high temperature or other COVID-19 symptoms, they will be sent home and advised to follow the stay-at-home guidance. • If necessary, the individual will be isolated in a separate room until they can be collected / arrangements made to transport them home. • Line Managers will maintain regular contact with staff members during this time. • If advised that a member of staff or public that were recently on site has developed COVID-19, staff with whom they have interacted advised to self-isolate as per the Government guidance. 				<p>Internal communication channels and cascading of messages through line managers will be carried out regularly to reassure and support staff in a fast changing situation.</p> <p>Line managers will offer support to staff who are affected by Coronavirus or has a family member affected.</p> <p>Communicate Standard Operating Procedure for a suspected case of COVID-19 to all staff.</p>				

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5. Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All lecture theatres, teaching spaces and laboratories on the campus can be ventilated in a number of different ways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1)-Mechanically ventilated. (2)-Naturally ventilated where air changes occur through the opening of windows and doors. (3)-Or a combination of mechanical and natural ventilation. The current University estate complies with the standards of The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993. In line with Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) guidance, a ventilation survey of teaching spaces has been undertaken. In mechanically ventilated rooms, normal capacities have been measured against ventilation requirements and modified, where applicable, to maintain adequate ventilation levels. For rooms within categories (2) and (3) above, taking on board recommendations from the HSENI, adequate ventilation can be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular opening of windows and doors throughout the working day. For example, at the beginning/end of the teaching session. And/or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving, fully or partially, window(s)/door(s) open, where possible, throughout the working day. To support the above, University heating systems will be carefully monitored and configured to help keep ambient temperatures comfortable for students and staff. When deciding what to wear on campus, we encourage you to consider that spaces will be ventilated. 								

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6. Social Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 1m+ social distance should be maintained between members of staff, 2m where possible. • Steps taken to review work schedules, working from home etc. to reduce number of staff on premises at any one time. • Processes / facilities redesigned to ensure social distancing is maintained where possible. • Number of people each person has contact with reduced by using fixed teams or partnering. • Back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) used whenever possible. • Students are not required to socially distance when in teaching spaces, study spaces, libraries, and communal areas. 				<p>Staff / students to be reminded on a daily basis of the importance of social distancing both in the workplace and outside of it.</p> <p>Senior management to actively monitor effectiveness of and compliance with social distancing arrangements.</p>				

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7. Hand washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand washing facilities with soap and water in place in close proximity to each work area. • Gel sanitisers in any area where washing facilities not readily available. • Staff / students reminded on a regular basis to wash their hands for 20 seconds with water and soap and the importance of proper drying. • Staff / students reminded to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues – Follow Catch it, Bin it, Kill it and to avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands. • Posters, leaflets, and other materials displayed. • Staff / students advised to cover any cuts on skin. 				<p>Encourage staff / students to carry out visual skin checks and report any concerns.</p> <p>Consider the provision of hand cream / emollient.</p> <p>Levels of soap, hand sanitiser etc regularly checked and replenished.</p>				
8. Touch points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of items and surfaces that are touched regularly, particularly in areas of high use such as door handles, light switches etc. • Extra cleaning materials provided in offices for staff to use freely, in addition to University cleaning regimes. 				<p>Rigorous checks will be carried out by line managers to ensure that the necessary procedures are being followed.</p>				

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9. Face Coverings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where RPE is already a requirement for non-COVID-19 risks associated with the work undertaken, continue to wear RPE issued. <p>Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are required to wear a face covering, at all times, when circulating around campus buildings including corridors and communal spaces. Face coverings should be worn when moving around office areas but can be removed while seated in, for example, offices, social space, and cafes and anywhere else where 1m+ distance between persons can be maintained. Teaching staff may remove their face covering if they can maintain 2m social distancing from students. Staff who are exempt from wearing a face covering must carry a University exemption card. <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are required to wear a face covering at all times during teaching sessions, study sessions and when circulating around campus buildings including corridors and communal spaces. Students who are exempt from wearing a face covering must carry a University exemption card. 				Advise staff / students of the availability of face coverings supplied by the University.				

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10. Gloves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where risk assessment identifies wearing of gloves as a requirement of the job, an adequate supply of these will be provided. Staff / students instructed on how to remove gloves carefully to reduce contamination and how to dispose of them safely. 				Staff / students to be reminded that wearing of gloves is not a substitute for good hand washing.				
11. Waste Disposal (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste PPE / RPE / Face coverings disposed of directly in the general waste stream. 				Ensure sufficient bin capacity to deal with wipes / cleaning materials / waste PPE. Monitor and review as necessary.				

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12. Access / Egress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible buildings will operate a one-way system with separate entrance and exit doors utilised. • Staff / students advised to follow any on-campus signage providing information on COVID-19, including following one-way systems where these are in place. • Ground floor entrances restricted to single use only. • Reduced movement around buildings by discouraging non-essential trips. • Hand-sanitising points set up at building entrances / exits. • For electronic access areas staff / students advised to use their cards to swipe rather than touching the keypad. • For staff – 1m+ social distancing applies for transiting buildings. • For students – No requirement to socially distance when using any area where they are expected to be, however, 1m+ distance is maintained between staff and students. 				<p>Communicate to staff new access / egress arrangements.</p> <p>Directional / Entrance / Exit Signage required.</p>				
13. Staircases / Lifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System implemented to ensure that internal staircases are limited to one person at a time. • Where there are 2 or more staircases one should be access only and the other egress only. • Reduced maximum occupancy for lifts. 				<p>Directional signage.</p> <p>Induction training to educate staff on new guidance.</p>				

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14. Toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of persons permitted into washroom at any one time displayed on doors. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				
15. Changing Rooms / Showers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure that they are kept clean and clear of personal items and that social distancing is achieved. Introduction of enhanced cleaning. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				
16. Tea rooms/ rest areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social distancing adhered to for staff / students. Seating and tables reconfigured to maintain spacing and prevent face-to-face interactions. Staff / students encouraged to bring own food and drinks. Where practicable kitchen items such as microwaves and kettles spread out to maintain social distancing. Staggered break times to limit number of staff / students in area. Hand washing on entering / exiting the area. Staff / students responsible for clearing up after themselves and disposing of their own waste in the relevant waste bins. Enhanced cleaning regime in place - surfaces and contact points cleaned after each use e.g., kettles, fridge handles, microwave buttons etc. 				<p>Monitor and review as necessary.</p> <p>Signage required.</p>				

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17. Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workstations located to allow social distancing to be maintained. • Workstation assigned to an individual and not shared, where possible. • If shared workstations are required, they will be cleaned between users. • Physical reminders such as floor tape to mark areas to help keep staff / students the required distance apart considered. • Steps taken to review work schedules, working from home etc. to reduce number of staff in offices at any one time. • Cleaning regime in place especially for items regularly used such as keyboards / telephones / photocopiers. Cleaning materials made available for use. • If office is front facing (e.g., reception area) the use of physical barriers such as perspex screens considered. • Staff advised to undertake a lateral flow test at the on-campus testing centre and to have received a negative result prior to returning to work in offices. 				<p>Monitor and review as necessary.</p> <p>Relocation of staff mailboxes where appropriate.</p> <p>Relocation/allocation of photocopiers to reduce access to main offices, where appropriate.</p>				

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18. Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TEAMS used instead of face-to-face meetings, where practicable. Where meetings are deemed essential and cannot be carried out remotely then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimum number of attendees with 1m+ separation maintained should be advised. Meetings held in well-ventilated areas / outdoor meetings considered. Seating and tables reconfigured to maintain spacing and prevent face-to-face interactions. Hand sanitisers provided in meeting rooms. Attendees and duration of meeting recorded. Maximum numbers for meeting rooms calculated and relevant information provided on notices. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				
19. Equipment / Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared equipment cleaned before and after each use i.e., photocopiers (see section 6 'Touch Points'). Staff / students advised to wash / sanitise hands before and after using any shared equipment. Additional cleaning materials supplied with stock checked daily. 				Provide signage at frequently used equipment.				

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20. Commuting / Travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where possible, staff / students should avoid public transport and travel to work in a private vehicle / walk / cycle. Staff / students using public transport to follow precautions as per current Public Health advice. Non-essential travel minimised. Staff / students advised to only car-share with members of their own household or with the same person to reduce mixing – face coverings must be worn. 				<p>Advise staff / students of the availability of face coverings supplied by the University.</p> <p>Monitor and review as necessary.</p>				
21. Use of University Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University shared vehicles risk assessed for appropriate numbers and cleaned at handovers. Number of people travelling together in any one work vehicle minimised. Fixed travel partners used where possible. 				<p>Monitor and review as necessary.</p>				
22. First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate number of first aiders on site. First aiders provided with suitable PPE. First aiders provided with updated advice via email. http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/EstatesDirectorate/UniversitySafetyService/FileStore/WordandExcelDocuments/Filetoupload.971470.en.pdf First aid signage updated to reflect changes in first aiders available due to decreased number on site. First Aid grab bags provided which have the recommended additional PPE. 				<p>Staff to be reminded to use security emergency number 2222 if medical assistance is required.</p> <p>Monitor and review as necessary.</p>				

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23. Fire Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate number of fire wardens on site (including premises fire officer, evacuation controller etc.) Staff / students advised that fire doors are not to be wedged open. Routine fire checks undertaken. Staff / students advised of assembly points / reoccupation procedures if there are any changes. 				Confirm that the fire assembly point permits for 2m physical distancing – if not, consider crowd dispersal for 30 minutes.				
24. Where work does not permit 1m+ social distancing for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to cease until a risk assessment has been completed and suitable control measures implemented. Face coverings (Type IIR surgical mask) worn at all times. If a face covering cannot be worn due to a medical condition, staff / students advised to contact People and Culture or the Student Guidance Centre to request an exemption card. Work at less than 1m limited to 15 minutes per day. Staff / students involved in close contact work advised to have undertaken a lateral flow test and received a negative result prior to work commencing. Staff / students also advised to take up the COVID-19 vaccination. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				

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25. Site Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where site visits are required, authorisation obtained from line manager and site guidance on social distancing and hygiene explained on or before arrival. Visitors / contractors working on site advised to undertake a lateral flow test and to have received a negative result prior to work commencing. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				
26. Lone Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-risk lone working is not permitted. Follow normal lone procedures as stated in the University / School Lone Working Policies. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				
27. Delivery Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery drivers and University staff to maintain 2m social distance at all times, where possible. Contactless delivery documents considered. Staff receiving goods and packages advised to ensure good hand hygiene after receiving parcels etc. Non-business deliveries restricted. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				

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28. Working in a Laboratory / Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laboratory risk assessments updated to take COVID-19 risks into account e.g., blood samples may now possibly contain the virus. Staff positioned at laboratory / workshop benches 1m+ apart and not face to face across a bench. Students are not required to be socially distanced at laboratory / workshop benches but must wear face coverings at all times. Movement through laboratories / workshops one way with a separate entrance and exit door if possible. The exit door should be next to a hand washing sink. Shift work implemented where possible with teams of staff kept constant and separate from other teams. Air flow increased on air handling systems to a higher number of air changes per hour. If shift work is taking place, ensure (in consultation with Estates) that air handling systems are working at optimum conditions for the duration of shift work. Commonly used equipment to be used one person at a time and the key touch points disinfected after every use. Staff / students advised to wash hands before and after using any shared equipment. Work benches disinfected at the end of each shift. Appropriate PPE as stated in the activity risk assessment worn where necessary. Face coverings are not necessary if social distancing can be adhered to. Disposable PPE safely and hygienically disposed of after use in the general waste stream. High risk lone working is not permitted e.g., entering liquid nitrogen storerooms. 				Monitor and review as necessary.				

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30. Research involving human participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, engagement with research participants moved to on-line / telephone calls. • Where contact with participant cannot be carried out remotely then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A health analysis must be completed by the research participant and the researcher as close to the research meeting as possible. • Researchers should consider meeting participants outdoors / in well ventilated areas. • Researchers should also consider those who require assistance from another member of their family – has a safe waiting area been arranged for them? • Focus groups must be held with seating and tables configured to prevent face-to-face interactions and maintain social distancing. • Hand sanitisers to be provided. • Seating and tables to be cleaned between groups of participants. • Record meeting times and participants to enable Tracking and Tracing after the event, if necessary. • Where it has not been possible to move research to a remote way of working (e.g., in a clinical setting) the use of face coverings needs to be assessed. 				Read the Document on Principles of Human Participant Research during COVID-19 Pandemic and complete using the prompt questions provided.				

This assessment should be reviewed at regular intervals and immediately if there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid (for example after any accidents or incidents) or if there is a significant change in the work to which it relates.

*Please use the risk matrix below for completing the assessment:

Severity	Probability			
	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
Minor	1	2	3	4
Moderate	2	4	6	8
Serious	3	6	9	12
Very Serious	4	8	12	16
Extreme	5	10	15	20

Risk Rating		Action
Score	Risk Level	
1-5	Low	No further action necessary
6	Medium	Although tolerable – monitor activity
8-10	High	Further measures required
12-20	Very High	Immediate action required – cease activity

Risk is comprised of two elements, the likelihood of harm occurring and the severity of that harm. In risk assessment, the likelihood of harm is the estimated frequency of the harm occurring and severity is the estimated seriousness of the potential to cause harm. A subjective estimate of both must be made.

Hazard severity should be rated on a scale of 1 to 5.

- 1 – Minor (Trivial effect or very minor first aid attention required)
- 2 – Moderate (Likely to require first aid or minor medical attention, short term effect)
- 3 – Serious (Significant injury or condition, may result in lost time)
- 4 – Very Serious (Very Serious injury or condition, may have long term effects)
- 5 – Extreme (Very Serious injury or condition or a fatality, may affect multiple persons)

Likelihood of harm occurring should be rated on a scale of 1 to 4

- 1 – Unlikely (Unlikely to occur but not impossible)
- 2 – Possible (Less likely to occur than not to occur)
- 3 – Likely (More likely to occur than not to occur)
- 4 – Very Likely (Very likely though not necessarily certain to occur)

The factors for severity and likelihood are multiplied together to give the risk rating. This value will help evaluate the risk as to whether the risk is controlled to the required level.



The risk rating enables decisions to be taken on the amount of effort to be expended on the control of a risk, but any hazard that is certain or very likely to cause injury must be attended to and the risk reduced even if the severity is low. All risks must be controlled so far as is reasonably practicable.