

NDCN Safety Policy 011: Supervisors Responsibilities

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2) Introduction

The term 'supervisor' is commonly used in the University to refer primarily to those individuals who deal with students or who engage in research, but for the purposes of health and safety law, many other members of staff may also have a supervisory function¹.

An employee in NDCN may be a supervisor if he/she has the power and authority to give instructions and/or orders to subordinates.

Such supervisor(s) will be held responsible for the work and actions of employee, student or visitor under their day-to-day control.

Individuals holding such titles as team leader, overseer, coordinator, facilitator, principal researcher, or manager therefore may be considered 'supervisors' if these criteria apply and for the purposes of this Policy will hereafter be referred to as 'supervisors'.

3) General responsibilities

The role of the supervisor carries several responsibilities such as organising his/her section and staff, ensuring that productivity and quality standards are met.

Supervisors are also responsible to ensure that all health and safety as well as welfare arrangements are adequately followed.

To ensure that this is done, the supervisor must make certain that the staff under his/her control have the relevant training, tools, materials, and support that they need to carry out their various duties.

Safety training is not separate from other job related or skills training, but integral to it.

Any supervisor who engages a contractor for maintenance, or similar, purposes will assume responsibility for them while they remain on University premises.

4) Training

The Safety office offers a training course on supervisors' responsibilities, to highlight supervisors' H&S responsibilities; what risk assessments are needed and what is meant by competence. The course raises awareness for the need for deputising arrangements and documentation.

It emphasizes requirements for training, supervision, accident reporting and investigation where necessary. It develops understanding of inspections and equipment maintenance; housekeeping, waste disposal, decontamination and decommissioning

You will need to book the training using this link:

<https://cosy.ox.ac.uk/accessplan/LMSPortal/UI/Page/Courses/book.aspx?courseid=SAFE00015>

5) Safety Responsibilities

Supervisors must:

- Be conversant with the University's safety policies and departmental local rules,
- Ensure that staff, students, or visiting workers for whom they are responsible receive suitable induction training and information about emergency procedures,
- Ensure the necessary risk assessments have been done and the safety provisions relating to the work discussed with those doing it,
- Ensure that relevant safety documentation is readily available for reference,
- Ensure that those under their supervision have received training appropriate to their needs and that safety considerations are integrated into this training,
- Document the training given to individuals,
- Ensure that the work environment and equipment are safe and well maintained,
- Identify and correct hazardous conditions,
- Investigate accidents or incidents and revise risk assessments, where necessary,
- Ensure that relevant staff are registered with the Occupational Health Service, and that they attend health surveillance appointments when required,
- Monitor compliance with risk assessments, enforce the control measures and censure those who fail to comply,
- Ensure proper disposal of waste materials,
- Ensure compliance with relevant departure requirements and the proper handover of laboratory or other workspace to relevant parties.

6) Risk Assessment

Supervisors must ensure that 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments are undertaken and recorded for all activities with significant risk.

Any measures decided upon in the assessment are discussed fully with those involved in the work and that all control measures are properly implemented.

All supervisors must satisfy themselves that the emergency arrangements for out of hours or lone working are appropriate and that those under their supervision are fully aware of the systems in place for such work to be conducted.

People below the age of 16 years old are strictly not allowed in laboratories. (See young people and children policy³).

Young people (over 16 years old but under 18 years old) must have a Young people at work risk assessment drawn up, be signed by the parents, school (if school placement), supervisor, Departmental Safety Officer and Head of Department prior to any work starting.

7) Competence

Supervisors must ensure that individuals under their supervision are competent to work safely.

Supervisors should not make any assumptions about the experience, aptitude, understanding, or competence of any new member of staff, or visitor.

8) Information, instruction and training

Staff, students, and visitors must be provided with the following when starting in the Department:

- Building induction (Contact Facilities Team)
- Laboratory induction (if applicable, it follows the NDCNH&S induction)
- Biological Safety & Genetic Modification, an introduction (course run by the safety Office)²
- On the job training for specialist equipment

The supervisor must be confident that an appropriate standard has been reached before the trainee can work independently and been signed off as being competent.

Supervisors should maintain training records and formally sign off individuals who have attained competence in particular aspects of their work.

9) On-going supervision

The degree of ongoing supervision required will depend on the individual(s) level of experience.

Competence level will dictate the level of supervision required.

Those who demonstrate difficulties with technique, understanding, language, or those who exhibit recklessness or tendencies to ignore instruction, especially in relation to safety will require more extensive supervision.

10) Absences from the Department

Active supervision is dependent upon the availability of the supervisor for consultation.

Although the nature of the work or research may necessarily dictate periods away from the University, supervisors are expected to make suitable deputising arrangements for such occasions.

The deputising arrangements must be agreed and conveyed to all persons being supervised and the department apprised of those arrangements.

This is carried out via the annual Safety Compliance Return, which is sent through in spring by the Departmental Safety Officer.

11) Health Surveillance

Certain activities will require workers' registration with the Occupational Health Service so that a programme of health surveillance can be instigated.

This registration must be completed for individuals working with animals allergens, human samples or relevant substances with occupational surveillance and sent to the Departmental Safety Officer.

12) Enforcement

The procedures, protocols, or systems of work decided upon and described in risk assessments must be followed diligently.

When instruction is given, supervisors should also check that the instruction is carried through.

Where workers are observed to disregard or omit control measures the escalation procedure will be followed as necessary⁴.

13) Maintenance of equipment

Supervisors must ensure that all the equipment under their control is properly maintained in a safe condition, and taken out of service if a fault is identified.

14) Laboratory relocation or clearance

a) Notice

Prior to lab being moved the group leader must have notified his intention to Head of Department as well as the Head of Finance and Administration.

b) Arrangements

The Department Facilities Team will then liaise with the group leader to identify what equipment and research material, if any, is to be relocated.

c) Equipment

NDCN communal equipment cannot be relocated as ownership rests with NDCN.

A list of the anticipated equipment to be relocated will be forwarded to the Head of Finance and Administration for approval.

Note that service contracts related to relocating equipment will naturally be passed over to the group leader.

De-register equipment with Safety Office if relevant (MSC, lasers), ensure that the equipment is appropriately decontaminated for transport. Affix a decontamination certificate on the relocating equipment.

d) Research material

The intention of relocating Human samples must be notified to the Human Tissue Manager. Consent and Ethical approval will be checked to see if relocation is possible.

Samples under the HTA licence must be deregistered before moving.

Human samples handed over to a group remaining must be transferred to the new owner group database, inventory must be updated to reflect this change. Suitable Material Transfer Agreement must be drawn out by Research Services in advance of the relocation.

Chemicals and samples stored in reagents to be relocated must be notified to the Departmental Safety Officer in order to ascertain if any transport regulations apply and for support with transport arrangements.

Material identified for disposal must be registered with the Safety Office for safe disposal – the waste owner will need to complete a Waste Transport form⁵.

Gas cylinders will be returned to the manufacturer for collection – contact Facilities Team to organise return.

e) Area of responsibility

Where a group member of the group leader had a responsibility, the Department must be notified in a timely manner in order to replace the position.

f) Genetically Modified Organisms

Note that Departmental GMO RA notification will require to be transferred to the new hosting research building – even if within the University of Oxford.

g) Transport

HRH is the preferred courier for relocating scientific equipment and research material because of their long-standing safety records and are ADR compliant.

HRH will be contacted to obtain a quote for the move, they may visit to assess the location and size of the equipment, Facilities Team will liaise with HRH and the group relocating in order to find a suitable date for the move. The cost of the relocation is to be charged to the group moving.

Scientific equipment must be suitably disinfected and packed for safe transport – Departmental Safety Officer will be able to advice on suitable packaging⁶. Research material must be assessed for transport regulations applying to them. Some substance cannot be transported and will need to be disposed of.

h) Clear out and recommissioning

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See also University of Oxford Safety Policy: S1/09

Each group member leaving will be required to complete a Leavers Form – this will identify forwarding contact details as well as specifying further access requirement and returning software and property.

The lab space must be checked prior to be handed out to a new group or an expanding group to ensure there is no legacy items left behind.

All lab surfaces should be cleaned with 1/20 Chemgene.

Cryofreezer towers, ultra-low freezers, freezers, fridges, cold rooms and cupboard will need to be checked also.

Where materials have been handed over to a group remaining in the Department, boxes and containers must be relabelled to reflect this change.

15) References

¹University safety policy statement UPS S1/09 – Supervisors responsibilities
<https://safety.admin.ox.ac.uk/supervisor-responsibilities>

NDCN safety policies:

²NDCN POL 012 Young People at work – *pending DSAC approval – link to be inserted*

³Biological Safety & Genetic Modification, an introduction
<https://cosy.ox.ac.uk/accessplan/LMSPortal/UI/Page/Courses/book.aspx?courseid=SAFE00002>

⁴NDCN POL 017 Escalation Procedure –
(<https://www.ndcn.ox.ac.uk/files/about/ndcnsafetypolicy017escalationprocedure.pdf>)

⁵NDCN POL 013 Waste segregation –
(<https://www.ndcn.ox.ac.uk/files/about/ndcnsafetypolicy013wastesegregation-2.pdf>)

⁶NDCN POL 010 Transport of research material – link to be updated
(<https://www.ndcn.ox.ac.uk/files/about/ndcnsafetypolicy010transportofresearchmaterial-1.pdf>)