

Reviewed November 2014.

It should be noted that a manual handling risk assessor should be available in departments and schools. Training can be arranged by the Department of Occupational Health and Safety

1. Introduction

Nationally over 30% of reportable accidents are due to manual handling problems. The vast majority of these accidents result in over-three-day injury most commonly a sprain or strain, often of the back. This may result in

- permanent injury to the employee
- cost to the University in time off work
- possible prosecution/compensation claims against the University

The percentage of injuries caused by manual handling in the education sector is almost as high as in the construction industry.

Why do these accidents happen?

Sprains and strains are caused by incorrect application and/or prolongation of bodily force. Poor posture and excessive repetition of movement can be important factors in their onset. Many manual handling injuries are cumulative rather than being truly attributable to any single handling incident. The injured do not always make a full recovery; the result can be physical impairment or even permanent disability.

2. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992

Summary of Main Duties of Employers

Regulation 4(1)(a) Avoidance of manual handling

Each employer shall avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable;

Regulation 4(1)(b)(i) Assessment of risk

Each employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided; and

Regulation 4(1)(b)(ii) Reducing the risk of injury

Each employer shall reduce the risk of injury from those operations so far as is reasonably practicable.

Regulation 4(1)(b)(iii) The load

When it is reasonably practicable to do so each employer shall provide information on the weight and centre of gravity of the load.

Regulation 4(2) Reviewing the assessment

Any assessment shall be reviewed if there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change in the manual handling operations to which it relates.

Summary of Main Duties of Employees

Regulation 5

Each employee while at work shall make full and proper use of any system of work provided for his use by his employer in compliance with Regulation 4(1)(b)(ii) of these Regulations.

Duties are already placed on employees by section 7 of the HSW Act, under which they must:

- (a) take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their activities; and
- (b) co-operate with their employers to enable them to comply with their health and safety duties.
- (c) advise their employer of any underlying condition which may make them more vulnerable to injury.

3. Definitions

In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires –

- (1) “manual handling operations” means any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or by bodily force.
- (2) “The load” is any discrete object including a person or animal. Implements, tools or machines are excluded¹ while in use for their intended purpose.

4. University Policy on manual handling, risk assessment and training

¹

It is the policy of the University to comply with these Regulations and the following procedures must be followed.

Duties of Heads of Department/Schools

The Head of Department/School must ensure the following:

- (a) that the need for manual handling is **avoided** as far as is reasonably practicable.
- (b) that an **assessment** is made of the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that cannot be avoided.
- (c) that the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling is **reduced** as far as is reasonably practicable.

Heads of Departments/Schools must appoint a manual handling assessor who will be trained by the Department of Occupational Health and Safety. The assessor will -

- (d) Assess manual handling tasks in that department.
- (e) Identify individuals most at risk from manual handling tasks.
- (f) Arrange for these individuals to be sent for manual handling training by the Department of Occupational Health and Safety.
- (g) Periodically review the assessments and performance via feedback from staff and review any accidents and work-related ill health, in conjunction with the Workplace Safety Adviser and Workplace Health and Safety Committee.

Training

The University will

1. Train departmental assessors and those individuals at most risk in how to carry out manual handling procedures safely

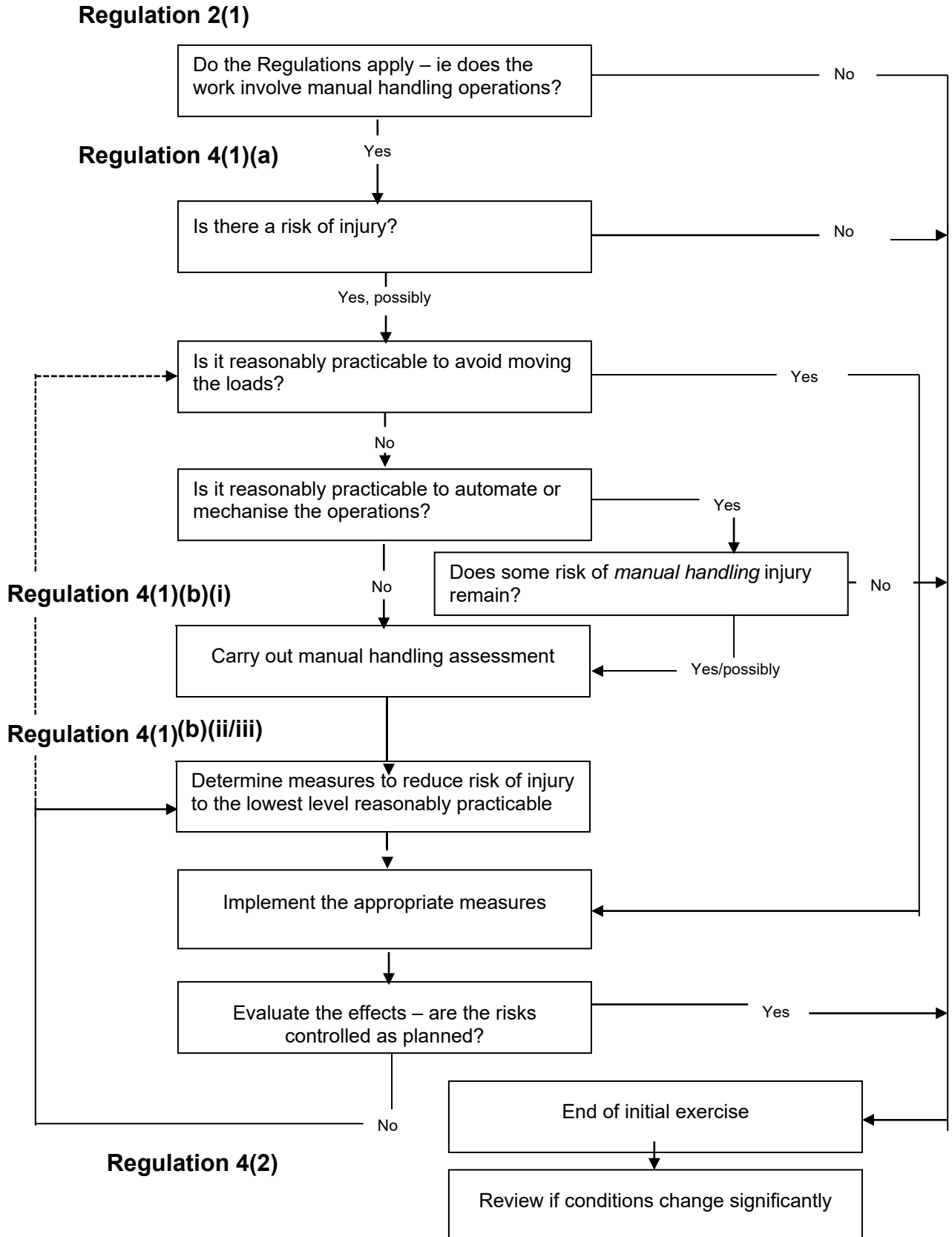
The training will include:

- how to recognise harmful manual handling
- appropriate systems of work
- the use of mechanical aids
- good handling techniques.

2. Give advice via the Department of Occupational Health and Safety to departments and schools on specific manual handling problems.

5. Flow Chart

Assessors, when trained, will follow the flow chart below, to decide what action if any will need to be carried out with a manual handling operation.



6. Manual Handling Risk Assessment

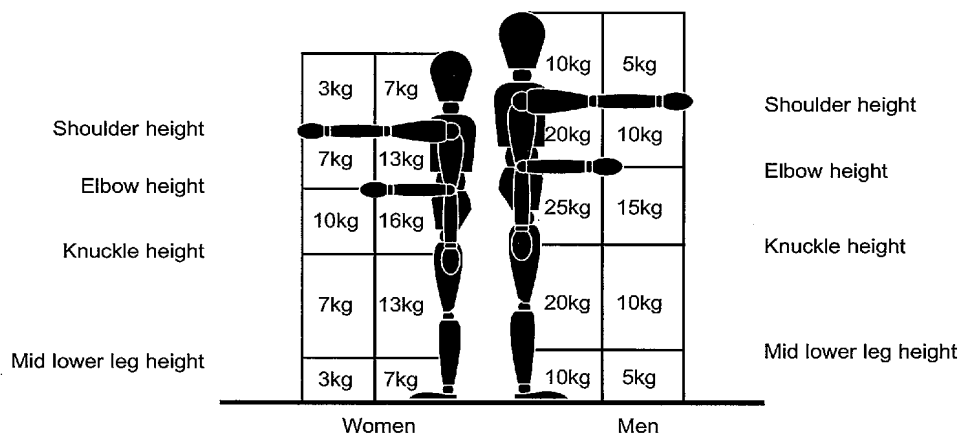
This will be carried out by trained risk assessors. The fundamental objective is to identify all manual handling tasks and to categorise them so that the appropriate action is implemented.

Part I Overview

Each manual handling task must be assessed to ascertain the level of risk. The assessment must identify where the risk lies and suggest an appropriate range of ideas for reducing the potential for injury by making modifications to the load, the task and the working environment. Appendix 1 can help with this process by ensuring a systematic examination of all potential risk elements.

Many operations when looked at afresh can be done in a safer easier and more efficient manner rather than “the way we have always done it”. The weight lifting guidelines below can be used as a FILTER to decide if a simple or more detailed assessment is required. These weight guidelines create an approximate boundary within which the load [if lifted correctly] is unlikely to create a risk of injury sufficient to warrant a detailed assessment. However the guidelines should not be regarded as safe weight limits for lifting, there is no threshold below which manual handling operations may be regarded as ‘safe’.

Remember individuals' capacities vary and one must take into account peoples level of fitness, injury history, state of health, pregnancy etc. when making a risk assessment.



Similar guideline figures apply to carrying operations when the load is held close to the body and is carried no further than approximately 10 metres without resting.

For repetitive work reduce loads as below

operations per minute	% weight reduction
1-2	30%
5-8	50%
>12	80%

Guidelines for pushing/pulling a load on a trolley etc.

	Male	Female
Force required to start/stop	25 Kg	16 Kg
Force to keep load in motion	10 Kg	7 Kg

If the manual handling task falls outside the above guidelines a detailed risk assessment is necessary (see Form MH2 at Appendix 3).

A detailed risk assessment should also be carried out if

- the task requires twisting of the trunk
- the worker does not control the pace of work
- activity pauses for rest are inadequate or there is no change of which provides an opportunity to use different muscles
- the handler must support the load for any length of time.

Part II Method

- Step 1 Make a list of all manual handling tasks using Form MH1 (Appendix 2) or similar.
- Step 2 Using the filter guidance in Part I above examine the task and decide if a detailed assessment is required. Appendix 1 will help.
- Step 3 If you think a detailed assessment is required then use Form MH2.
- Step 4 Prioritise your assessments, doing the high risk ones first.

As guidance, a worked example from the HSE Guidance Notes is included at Appendix 4.

Appendix 1 - Assessment Guidance

Problems to look for when making an assessment	Ways of reducing the risk of injury
<i>The tasks: do they involve -</i>	<i>Can you -</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding loads away from trunk? • twisting, stooping or reaching upwards? • large vertical movement? • long carrying distances? • strenuous pushing or pulling? • unpredictable movement of loads? • repetitive handling? • insufficient rest or recovery time? • a work rate imposed by a process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve workplace layout to improve efficiency? • reduce the amount of twisting and stooping? • avoid lifting from floor level or above shoulder height? • cut carrying distances? • avoid repetitive handling? • vary the work, allowing one set of muscles to rest while another is used?
<i>The loads: are they -</i>	<i>Can you make the load -</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heavy, bulky or unwieldy? • difficult to grasp? • unstable or unpredictable? • intrinsically harmful, eg sharp or hot? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lighter or less bulky? • easier to grasp? • more stable? • less damaging to hold? <p>Have you asked your suppliers for help?</p>
<i>The working environment: are there -</i>	<i>Can you -</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constraints on posture? • poor floors? • variations in levels? • hot/cold/humid conditions? • strong air movements? • poor lighting conditions? • restrictions on movement or posture from clothes or personal protective equipment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remove obstructions to free movement? • provide better flooring? • avoid steps and steep ramps? • prevent extremes of hot and cold? • improve lighting? • consider less restrictive clothing or personal protective equipment?
<i>Individual capacity: does the job -</i>	<i>Can you -</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require unusual capability? • endanger those with a health problem? • endanger pregnant women? • call for special information or training? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take better care of those who have a physical weakness or are pregnant? • give your employees more information eg about the range of tasks they are likely to face? • provide training?

Appendix 3 - Assessment Form MH2

Manual Handling of Loads: Assessment Checklist

Section A – Preliminary:

*Circle as appropriate

Job description: Factors beyond the limits of the guidelines?	Is an assessment needed? (ie is there a potential risk for injury, and are the factors beyond the limits of the guidelines?) Yes/No*
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If 'Yes' continue. If 'No' the assessment need go no further.

Operations covered by this assessment (detailed description): Locations: Personnel involved: Date of assessment:	Diagrams (other information):
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Section B – See over for detailed analysis

Section C – Overall assessment of the risk of injury?

Low/Med/High*

Section D – Remedial action to be taken:

Remedial steps that should be taken, in order of priority: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Date by which action should be taken:
Date for reassessment:
Assessor's name: _____ Signature

TAKE ACTION ... AND CHECK THAT IT HAS THE DESIRED EFFECT

Section B – More detailed assessment, where necessary:					
Questions to consider:	If yes, tick appropriate level of risk			Problems occurring from the task (Make rough notes in this column in preparation for the possible remedial action to be taken)	Possible remedial action (Possible changes to be made to system/task, load, workplace/space, environment. Communication that is needed)
	Low	Med	High		
The tasks – do they involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding loads away from trunk? • twisting? • stooping? • reaching upwards? • large vertical movement? • long carrying distances? • strenuous pushing or pulling? • unpredictable movement of loads? • repetitive handling? • insufficient rest or recovery? • a work rate imposed by a process? 					
The loads – are they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heavy? • bulky/unwieldy? • difficult to grasp? • unstable/unpredictable? • intrinsically harmful (eg sharp/hot)? 					
The working environment – are there: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constraints on posture? • poor floors? • variations in levels? • hot/cold/humid conditions? • strong air movements? • poor lighting conditions? 					
Individual capability – does the job: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require unusual capability? • hazard those with a health problem? • hazard those who are pregnant? • call for special information/training? 					
Other factors: Is movement or posture hindered by clothing or personal protective equipment?	Yes/No				

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<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	