# POLICY ON FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

## 1 Introduction

1.1 The Regulatory Reform [Fire Safety Order] 2005, require the University to carry out fire risk assessments of all buildings in which people are employed to work. This policy addresses the risk assessment requirements required by the regulations.

1.2 University fire risk assessments are based on guidance provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government Guides.

1.3 Fire precautions in University buildings are maintained in a number of ways:

| The Fire Service | - carry out periodic inspections of buildings under the Regulatory Reform [Fire Safety] Order and, if necessary, issue notices requiring remedial action  
| Facilities | - enforce the requirements of the legislation on fire safety  
| - maintain the structural aspects of the fire precautions in buildings  
| - liaise with the Building Control section of Lancaster City Council on new building work and modifications to existing buildings  
| - arrange the periodic maintenance of fire detection and alarm systems  
| - arranges the periodic maintenance of fire fighting equipment and plant  
| - Arranges for fire risk assessments of buildings to be undertaken and maintains the register relating to these.  
| Security | - arrange for any defects in the fire precautions to be reported to Facilities for remedial action. This includes defective fire fighting equipment such as extinguishers  
| Heads of Departments/College and Residence Officers/Facilities Commercial Services | - Ensure that staff/students do not permit activities that would compromise the fire precautions in the department/college/bar.  

Ensure that periodic inspections are undertaken in the space occupied by their department. 
Liaise with other Heads of Department to agree procedures that do not compromise fire safety where space is shared.

Ensure that the guidance on notice boards in corridors is implemented.
Ensure that the guidance on the location of cupboards, recycling bins or waste bins in corridors or on means of escape is implemented.

The Safety Office

- Liaise with Facilities in the arrangement of fire risk assessments of all premises under control of the University.
- Carry out Health and Safety Audits which include Fire Safety Management
- Liaise with the Fire Service with regards to audits of the risk assessments under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Provide fire safety training for new members of staff and students incorporating the actions to be taken in the event of fire.
- Provide training for security officers and porters on the use of the Evac Chair to evacuate persons with impaired mobility.
- Liaise with Facilities and the Fire Service on fire safety matters related to structural alterations to buildings and new building work, particularly where means of escape is involved.

2 STEPS INVOLVED IN THE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

2.1 For fire risk assessments, there are five steps that the assessor must go through:

Step 1: Identification of potential fire hazards in the workplace.

Step 2: Deciding who might be in danger, e.g. employees, students, visitors, in the event of a fire in the workplace or whilst trying to escape from it.

Step 3: Evaluation of risks arising from the hazards and deciding whether the existing fire precautions are adequate or whether more should be done to eliminate (or minimise) the hazard or control the risks (e.g. by improving the fire precautions).

Step 4: Recording the findings and details of the action taken as a result: Communicating this to the occupants of the building.

Step 5: Keeping the assessment under review and revising it when necessary.

2.2 Step 1: Fire hazards

A hazard is something that has the potential to cause harm. The assessor must identify any fire hazards commonly found in workplaces. Some of the commonly found hazards will be:

- Flammable liquids stored
- Combustible materials allowed to accumulate
- Portable or radiant heaters in use
- Tasks which introduce ignitions sources into the workplace
- Smoking
- Plastic or rubber materials, especially in the form of foam, used or stored in the workplace
- 'Hot' work, such as welding, grinding, brazing, etc.

2.3 Step 2: People at Risk

Risk is the likelihood of a hazard actually causing harm. If there is a fire, the main priority is to ensure that all persons reach a place of safety quickly. Putting the fire out is secondary to this because the greatest danger from fire in a workplace is the spread of the fire, heat and smoke through it. If a workplace does not have adequate means of detecting and warning, or adequate means of escape, a fire can trap persons or they may be overcome by heat and smoke before they can leave the workplace.

The assessor needs to identify who may be at risk if there is a fire, how they will be warned and how they will escape. The assessor must identify where people are working, whether at permanent work stations or occasional ones, and consider who else might be at risk, such as visitors, contractors, service engineers, etc., and where these people are likely to be found.

2.4 Step 3: Evaluation of Risks

Steps 1 and 2 will have identified what the hazards are and who may be at risk because of them. The assessor now needs to evaluate the risk and decide whether enough has been done to reduce it or whether more needs to be done by considering:

- the chance of a fire occurring and whether the sources of ignition can be reduced or the potential fuel for a fire minimised
- the fire precautions that are already in place and whether they are sufficient for the remaining risks and will ensure everyone is warned in case of fire
- the means people can use to make their escape safely (or put the fire out if it is safe for them to do so)

2.5 Step 4: Recording the Findings and Actions

The assessor must record the significant findings of the assessment together with the details of any persons identified as being at particular risk.

A form is available that can be used for the purpose. The fire risk assessments, records of maintenance of fire fighting equipment, sub-station carbon dioxide flooding systems and dry risers are kept in Facilities. Maintenance records for fire detection and alarm systems are also kept by Facilities. All these records are readily available for inspection.
2.6 Step 5: Reviewing and Revising

From time to time, changes in the workplace will be introduced which have an effect on fire risks and precautions, e.g. changes to the work processes, furniture, plant, machinery, substances, buildings, or the number of persons likely to be present in the workplace. Any of these could lead to new hazards or increased risk. If there is any significant change, the assessment will need to be reviewed in the light of the new hazard or risk.

Structural alterations to buildings, or new building work, will normally be notified to the Safety Office by Facilities, allowing a review to be carried out. However, the responsibility for notifying other alterations such as those described above, remains with the Head of Department, usually via the Area Safety Officer.

Unless significant changes occur in a building, a review of the fire risk assessment will be carried out after a maximum of 5 years.