

Code of Practice for Manual Handling

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1. Overview

Improper manual handling is a significant cause of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), which are injuries affecting joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues, particularly in the back and limbs. These injuries often develop over time due to cumulative strain from repetitive or awkward movements, excessive force, or prolonged tension. Given the diversity of roles within the University, awareness and control of manual handling risks are essential to promote a safe working environment.

2. Purpose

This Code of Practice sets out the University's approach to managing manual handling risks in compliance with relevant legislation, particularly [The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 \(as amended 2002\)](#) and [the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#). Its purpose is to provide clear guidance on preventing manual handling injuries through risk assessment, training, use of equipment, and effective reporting and investigation processes. It also establishes the responsibilities of all individuals and departments involved in manual handling activities.

3. Scope

This CoP applies to all staff, students, contractors, and visitors engaged in manual handling activities on University premises or whilst undertaking University-related tasks elsewhere. It covers all manual handling operations, including lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, and supporting loads. It is relevant across all faculties, departments, and service areas.

4. Definitions

“Manual Handling” – The transporting or supporting of a load by hand or bodily force, including lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving a load.

“Load” – Any object, animal or person being manually handled.

“Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)” – Injuries or disorders affecting muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, or nerves, often caused by repetitive or strenuous manual handling.

“Risk Assessment” – A systematic process to identify hazards related to manual handling, evaluate the risk of injury, and implement control measures.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Senior leadership

Senior leadership, including members of VCE, FOOs, Executive Directors, Deputy Directors, Associate Directors, Deputy Deans, some Heads of School and anyone on a senior managers contract must ensure that manual handling risks are identified, assessed, and effectively controlled within their areas of responsibility. They must allocate appropriate resources and promote continuous improvement in manual handling safety.

5.2. Managers

Managers at all levels are responsible for conducting or facilitating risk assessments for manual handling tasks, ensuring staff receive relevant training, providing appropriate

equipment, and fostering a safe work environment. They must also encourage prompt reporting of manual handling issues or injuries.

5.3. Health and Safety Managers

Health and Safety Managers provide specialist advice and support for manual handling risk assessments, training programmes, and compliance monitoring. They also review and update the Code of Practice and related procedures as necessary.

5.4. Health and Safety Local Officers (HaSLOs)

HaSLOs may act as the first point of contact for manual handling concerns within directorates and faculties. They can assist with risk assessments; help identify training needs and promote adherence to safe manual handling practices.

5.5. All staff

All staff must follow safe manual handling procedures, attend training when required, use provided equipment correctly, and report any manual handling hazards or symptoms of injury promptly. Staff should not undertake manual handling tasks beyond their capability or training.

5.6. Students

Students must comply with all rules and guidelines related to manual handling and use any provided equipment safely when handling materials or equipment during their studies or activities.

5.7. Contractors and Temporary Workers

Contractors and temporary workers must comply with University manual handling policies and report any concerns to their University contact or supervisor.

6. Procedure

The following procedures outline how the University manages manual handling activities to reduce the risk of injury, comply with legislation, and promote safe working practices.

6.1. Risk Assessment

All manual handling tasks must be subject to a risk assessment carried out by those familiar with the task and environment. Assessments must consider the nature of the load, the task, the working environment, and the individual capabilities of the person performing the task. Where risks are identified, control measures must be implemented to reduce injury potential, following the hierarchy of control. Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly or when significant changes occur.

6.2. Use of Equipment

Where manual handling risks cannot be eliminated, the University will provide appropriate equipment such as trolleys, sack trucks, hoists, or lifting aids. Staff must be trained in the correct use of this equipment and encouraged to use it consistently to minimize injury risk. Personal protective equipment will also be provided where necessary.

6.3. Training Programs

The University offers manual handling training programmes to all staff, which include practical lifting techniques, safe handling of specific items (e.g., cylinders), and guidance on pushing and pulling loads safely. Training can be arranged through Health & Safety Services and is mandatory for staff involved in manual handling tasks. Refresher training will be provided as necessary.

6.4. Incident Reporting and Investigation

All manual handling injuries, near misses, or symptoms suggestive of musculoskeletal disorders must be reported promptly via [the University's accident and incident reporting tool](#). Investigations will be conducted to identify root causes and inform improvements in risk control measures.

Employees experiencing symptoms should also report to their supervisor or manager and seek occupational health support if needed. Where additional support is needed the health and safety team should be contacted via safetyunit@greenwich.ac.uk

6.5. Accessibility and Support

The University is committed to ensuring that manual handling tasks are adapted to accommodate individuals with disabilities or health conditions. Reasonable adjustments can be made in consultation with occupational health services to enable safe participation in required tasks.

6.6. Monitoring and Review

Manual handling procedures, risk assessments, and training programmes will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure continued effectiveness and compliance with legal requirements. Feedback from staff, incident data, and audit results will be used to drive continuous improvement.

7. Further Guidance

7.1. Related Legislation:

In addition to the general duties contained in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, other, more specific [Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 \(as amended 2002\)](#) apply.

Links to these and further general guidance on Manual Handling can be found on HSE web pages; [Manual handling at work - HSE](#)

7.2. Related University documents:

- [Accident and Incident Reporting](#)
- [HS087 Guidance on Manual Handling Lifting Techniques](#)
- [HS102 Guidance for Pushing and Pulling Loads](#)
- [HS103 Guidance on Handling Cylinders or Long Narrow Loads](#)
- [Occupational Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Risk Management and Assessments](#)

7.3. Other related guidance:

- [Making the best use of lifting and handling aids-HSE](#)
- [Manual Handling Assessment Chart \(MAC Tool\)](#)
- [Managing Upper Limb Disorders in the Workplace. A brief guide-HSE](#)
- [Risk assessment of pushing and pulling \(RAPP\) tool-HSE](#)

8. Document History

Review Date	Reviewer	Summary of Review
10-Oct-25	Michelle Owusua Appiah-Agyekum Health and Safety Advisor	First copy. -Converted from webpage to new document format.

This document will be reviewed at least annually hereafter.