Health and Safety Services

UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH
Part of London and South East University Group

Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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1. Overview

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is defined in the PPE Regulations as "all equipment (including clothing affording protection against the weather) which is intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects the person against one or more risks to that person's health and safety, and any addition or accessory designed to meet that objective". Examples of PPE are gloves, eye or hearing protection, safety footwear, harnesses, safety helmets and high visibility clothing.

This guidance sets out the duties placed on the University, our employees and contractors, with regards the provision, use, maintenance and storage of PPE.

2. Definitions

"PPE" - Personal protective equipment.

"Protected characteristics" - These are specific attributes of individuals that are safeguarded by law against discrimination. In the UK, under the Equality Act 2010, there are nine protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation.

"Limb (b) workers" – Are individuals who work under contract for another party, typically performing casual or irregular work.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. The Employer (University)

Has a duty to provide PPE, free of charge, to 'employees' wherever health and safety risks cannot be adequately protected against by other equally or more effective means.

The definition of an employee was extended in April 2022 to include limb (b) workers, as well as those with a direct contract of employment – ie individual workers who have a more casual employment relationship, typically working under a contract of service. E.g Self-employed or casual workers.

NOTE: The regulations do not apply to people who are not workers, for example, volunteers, children while in school, students at university, and visitors to worksites.

They do however apply to trainees and students on work experience at the University.

In addition, the University must:

- Select PPE that is suitable for the risk, for employees who will be using it, and for the working environment.
- assess the PPE available, to ensure it is suitable and complies with product safety legislation (See Section 5 below).
- maintain the PPE in a clean and effective condition
- provide suitable storage for any PPE we provide
- ensure that the PPE provided is properly used
- provide information, instruction and training on correct use of PPE

Protected characteristics: Whilst any PPE provided must be fit for purpose and properly fitting, the University will also take into account any protected characteristics such as gender, pregnancy, race or any disability of the worker. Wherever reasonable, allowing workers to choose a style they feel best represents their identity.

Turban wearing Sikhs are exempt from the need to wear head protection in any workplace (including construction sites), with certain limited exceptions for high-risk tasks. The exemption applies to any turban-wearing Sikh in the workplace whether they are a worker or not (for example, visitors). It applies solely to turban-wearing members of the Sikh faith and applies only to head protection. All other necessary PPE must be worn.

There is, however, no exemption from the Regulations for disabled people, and suitable PPE must be provided and worn if the risk assessment indicates it is required. In some circumstances it may be possible to make adjustments and adaptations to PPE (e.g. a raised sole on protective footwear). Such changes will only be made in consultation with the manufacturer to ensure that the PPE remains suitable and sufficient to protect the wearer from harm.

3.2. Employees

Have a duty to use any PPE provided, in accordance with training and instruction given. In addition, employees must;

- Conduct a visual examination before using any item of PPE and report any loss or obvious defect in equipment provided. They must not carry out maintenance themselves, unless specifically trained and authorised to do so.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that PPE is returned to a safe storage area after use

3.3. Contractors

The duty to provide PPE to a contractor will typically fall to their employer. The University will only provide PPE to contractors if this has been explicitly agreed in advance.

3.4. Self-Employed Workers

Self-employed workers who provide their own PPE must ensure it is suitable, kept clean and maintained, and stored in suitable accommodation when not in use.

3.5. Self-Employed Contractors

Self-employed contractors who are provided with PPE by the University will have the same duties as our employees, as described above.

4. Guidance

4.1. Key points to remember:

Are there other ways to adequately control risk?

PPE should be the last resort. First you should consider other controls, in the following order (with elimination being the most effective and PPE being the least effective):

- **Elimination** – physically remove the hazard
- **Substitution** – replace the hazard
- **Engineering controls** – isolate people from the hazard

- **Administrative controls** – change the way people work
- **PPE** – protect the worker with equipment

If you cannot control the risk by other means, check that:

- PPE is provided
- It offers adequate protection for the intended use
- It is comfortable and fits the user
- People using it are adequately trained in correct use
- It is properly maintained, and defects are reported
- It is returned to its proper accommodation after use

4.2. Purchasing PPE

The University has approved suppliers for PPE, which can be found via Horizon on the Procurement system (punchout). For further advice on PPE selection please contact your local health and safety manager.

New personal protective equipment should carry a UKCA mark (or 'CE' mark in specific circumstances). This mark signifies that the PPE satisfies certain basic safety requirements and, in most cases, will have been tested and certified by an independent body.

When purchasing new PPE, also make sure that it comes with a declaration of conformity and instructions on how to use the item.

Do not be tempted to purchase cheaper PPE designed for occasional DIY use or low risk settings. In a work setting more robust, higher category PPE is needed. For example:

- **Category I** - protects against low risk e.g., light gardening gloves, washing up gloves, sunglasses
- **Category II** – offers medium risk protection against physical, electrical or chemical injuries e.g., face masks, safety boots, high-viz clothing, bump caps, gloves
- **Category III** - most serious risk protection e.g., fall-arrest harness, respirators, safety goggles.

5. Further information

5.1. Related HSE Guidance:

Further general guidance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can be found on Health and Safety Executive (HSE) web pages:

- Using personal protective equipment (PPE) to control risks at work
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) at work regulations from 6 April 2022,
- Personal Protective Equipment - HSE

6. Document History

Details of previous reviews are as follows:

Review Date	Reviewer	Summary of Review
13-08-2025	Anastasia Liasides – H&S Advisor	First Revision on new template V.25.1
29-10-2026	Chantelle Marriott H&S Advisor	Updated with new LASE logo

This document will be reviewed at least annually hereafter.