1. Introduction

1.1 Personal safety at work takes many forms and applies to all academic schools and service departments and activities, but the context of this guidance encompasses three specific issues:

- Lone working
- Work-related violence
- Personal Safety

1.2 The primary elements of all three issues are addressed, though it must be stressed that only by implementing the risk assessment process will Academic School and Service Departments staff be able to fully identify and manage their own specific risks.

2. Definitions

2.1 Lone working

2.1.1 Whilst health and safety legislation provides no specific definition of lone working it can be described as “work that is specifically intended to be carried out by unaccompanied persons, without direct supervision or immediate access to another person for assistance”.

2.1.2 Lone working does not generally apply to the likes of the first or last person at work (except those with specific opening/lock-up duties), or an individual going unaccompanied to a storeroom.

2.1.3 Whilst the term “lone working” clearly implies single employees it should be remembered that two, or even more, employees working in isolation could equally be at risk.

2.2 Work-related violence

2.2.1 Work-related violence can be defined as “an incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”.

Managing personal safety risks at work
2.2.2 Work-related violence can be physical or non-physical. Basic examples of each include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Non-physical</th>
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<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>Threats and threatening gestures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pushing and shoving</td>
<td>Abusive phone calls, letters, e-mails</td>
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<td>Damage to personal property</td>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
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<td>Kicking, biting, punching, spitting, etc.</td>
<td>Bullying/harassment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unwanted physical contact</td>
<td>Insults, innuendo, ridicule, sarcasm</td>
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</table>

Note: This guidance is aimed at external work-related violence i.e. non-employee violence directed at an employee. Internal, employee-on-employee work-related violence should be addressed separately the University’s Policies and Procedures in respect of bullying and harassment policies, grievance procedures, disciplinary procedures, etc.

2.3 Personal safety

2.3.1 For the purpose of this guidance “Personal Safety” can be defined as “personal precautions taken to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of the individual”

2.3.2 Personal safety overlaps both lone working and work-related violence and, to some extent, addresses issues not directly addressed by either. Most of the personal safety guidance can be applied equally to work and/or non-work situations.

3. Legislation

3.1 There is no specific health and safety legislation addressing lone working, work-related violence, or personal safety. However, the following legislation applies to all three issues:

3.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974:

3.2.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places general duties on both employers and employees, which are applicable to lone working, work-related violence and personal safety, the three primary examples being:

- **Section 2**: It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees
- **Section 2**: Employers must provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees
- **Section 7**: Employees must take reasonable care for their own and others safety and must co-operate with employers so far as it is necessary to enable them to meet their own obligations.
3.3 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regs. 1999

3.3.1 Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires risk assessments to be undertaken. Any lone working, violence at work and/or personal safety issues must be taken into consideration when conducting such assessments and, where any significant hazards are identified, specific risk assessments should be initiated.

4. Risk assessment

4.1 In general, an assessment of risk is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your School or Department, could cause harm to staff and students, so that you can weigh up whatever you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

- Specific risk assessments should be carried out for any situation where an individual’s safety is put at risk due to lone working or potential violence at work. Please refer to Risk Safety & Health’s - Safety Risk Assessment guidance – for advice and all relevant documentation (can be found at www.wlv.ac.uk/rsh).

- Sections 5, 6 and 7 of this document provide further guidance for specific risk assessment considerations.

5. Lone working

5.1 Where line managers identify lone worker issues then they must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, their safety. Consideration should be given to the fact that, despite the title, pairs, 2 or 3 employees working together may be susceptible to the same risks. The full risk assessment process, as per Risk Safety & Health’s - Safety Risk Assessment guidance, should be followed.

5.2 Risk assessment considerations for lone workers

5.2.1 Consideration should be given to:

- The remoteness or isolation of the workplace
- The timings of the task/activity i.e. outside normal working hours
- The duration of the task(s)
- Equipment, machinery and tools (including those being used, worked on, and/or moved)
- The presence of any hazardous substances
- Communication facilities, procedures and problems
- The potential for violence and/or criminal activity
- The nature of any possible injuries
- Whether personal health and fitness is an issue
- Access and egress
- Emergency procedures (including evacuation routes out of normal working hours)
- Assessing if it is a “one person job” (taking into account all of the above, and any other relevant factors, can one person safety undertake the activity?)
5.3 **Control measure considerations for lone workers**

5.3.1 Consideration should be given to:

- Can the requirement for lone working be eliminated (increasing staffing, changing shift patterns, etc.)
- Authorisation systems for lone working/out of hours working (including monitoring and permit to work procedures, etc.)
- Pre-inspection of work places to ensure emergency provisions are in place (escape routes, fire extinguishers, first aid equipment, etc.)
- Communications procedures including booking in and out, call-back systems, alarm facilities, arrangements for periodic checks, and any equipment requirements such as radios, personal alerters, mobile phones, etc.
- Medicals (where personal health and fitness is an issue)
- Safe systems of work (specific procedures and method statements)
- Information and training

6. **Work-related violence**

6.1 One risk associated with lone working is an increased susceptibility to work-related violence. However, many staff are potentially at risk from work-related violence, such as receptionists, security officers, cleaning staff, etc. It must be stressed that work-related violence includes non-physical violence such as threats, harassment, intimidation, sectarianism, etc., as well as physical violence such as assault, and that groups of 2-3 employees can be equally at risk from work-related violence as the lone worker.

6.2 Where potential work-related violence is identified then the risk assessment process as per Risk Safety & Health’s - Safety Risk Assessment guidance should still be followed.

6.3 **Risk assessments linked to work-related violence**

6.3.1 The primary aim of the work-related violence risk assessment is to identify if there is a problem (hazard identification). There are two main methods of doing this:

- Employee consultation
- Incident reporting

6.3.2 Analysis of the results of either and/or both should identify whether there is a potential problem.

6.4 **Employee consultation**

6.4.1 Many managers may not perceive that they have work-related violence issues, or think that work-related violence is rare, but employees’ views may differ. The easiest way to find out is to ask them. This can be done informally via managers, supervisors and/or safety representatives, or can be done formally with the likes of a short questionnaire. Ensure feedback is provided and any survey results are acknowledged. It must be remembered that a perceived threat of violence will have to managed as well as an actual threat.
6.5 Incident reporting

6.5.1 All work-related violence incidents must be reported to line managers and through the Incident reporting Information System (IRIS) managed by the Operations Division of the Facilities Department.

6.5.2 To report an incident via IRIS follow one of the following steps:

- Contact Security on numbers below
- Via on-line reporting at (http://www.wlv.ac.uk/incidentreport)
- Via an Incident Report form from any reception point

6.5.3 The Operations Division will classify and collate all IRIS data.

6.5.4 Should the incident constitute an Accident as outlined in Risk, Safety & Health Policy no: then it should be reported to the Department of Risk, Safety & Health using the processes outlined in the policy.

6.5.5 The Risk, Safety & Health Department will classify and collate all such data, and produce regular analytical statistics which are presented to Campus Safety and Safety Policy Committee meetings.

6.5.6 The Operations Division and the Risk, Safety & Health Department will liaise to ensure, where appropriate, the consistency and effectiveness of control measures and the identification and implementation of improvements.

6.6 Control measures - considerations

6.6.1 The emphasis must be firmly on preventative measures, and these will take three main forms: job design; the workplace environment; and training.

6.6.2 Job design - whilst operational needs and constraints will have a significant impact on job design, consideration should be given to whether there are procedural changes that can be introduced that would reduce the risk of work-related violence. Examples include:
• Eliminating lone workers by doubling up
• Increasing staff levels at high-risk times
• Altering shifts to avoid high-risk times
• Eliminating or minimising the handling of cash, or other “attractive” items
• Allocating known difficult customers to more experienced staff
• Changing the way customers make enquiries or gain information
• Systems for monitoring/communicating with personnel when away from the workplace (booking in and out boards, regular checks, telephone procedures, etc.)

6.6.3 The workplace environment - This centres on the physical aspects of the workplace. Examples include:

• Controlled access
• Removing potential weapons from the workplace, including innocuous items such as plant pots
• Improving lighting in appropriate areas
• Fitting protective screens (though these can also antagonise customers and should only be considered where the risk assessment justifies such)
• Making waiting areas amenable: Comfortable chairs, pastel colours, scenic pictures, magazines to read, etc.
• Providing panic buttons/alarms
• Use of closed circuit television (CCTV)
• Employing, re-allocating, re-scheduling and/or re-positioning of security guards
• Making sure washrooms are within a reasonable distance, sign posted and clean.

6.6.4 Training - training programmes should ensure staff awareness of personal safety procedures and work-related violence reporting systems. Additionally, all relevant personnel must be made aware of risk assessment findings. Relevant staff must also be trained in reducing the risk of a violent incident, coping with a violent incident, and to be aware of the likely aftermath of a violent incident in terms of their own reactions and those of others. Training courses are facilitated by the Department of Risk, Safety & Health. Visit the Staff Development Page at http://www.wlv.ac.uk/pers/personnel.htm for more details.

6.6.5 Post incident action - whilst the emphasis should be on prevention, consideration must also be given to post incident procedures where work-related violence has occurred. Individuals are the priority and, where a physical assault has taken place, the primary concern must be first aid and/or hospital treatment as required. However, even where a physical assault has not occurred there is still potentially a need for support, and suitable procedures must be designed and put in place.
6.6.6 **First line briefing** - this should be carried out as soon as practicable after the incident, normally by the immediate line manager or equivalent, with all or some of the following aims:

- To provide relevant individuals with the opportunity to talk through their experience
- To establish details of the incident
- To assess the effectiveness of existing policies, procedures, etc.
- To identify individuals who may need further support

The primary aim is to re-establish a safe working environment as soon as is practicable.

6.6.7 **Available support** - all employees involved in any such incidents should be advised of the availability of any counselling that is available via the Occupational Health Service of the Department of Risk, Safety & Health. Line managers who are uncertain as to whether individuals may need further support, or as to how much support a particular incident may warrant, may themselves have to contact the Occupational Health Service for advice and guidance.

6.6.8 **Professional debriefing and/or critical incident stress debriefing (CISD)** - the Occupational Health Service can also provide access to appropriately trained personnel externally. Interventions, such as providing an appropriate safe conversation, are aimed at preventing long term psychological issues, but must be provided as soon as practicable after the incident to be effective.

6.6.9 **Time off work** - could be considered for significant incidents, with duration based on the seriousness of the incident and on the individual (different people will be affected to different degrees). GP’s may make recommendations based on health issues, but remember that individuals may also need time to see solicitors, insurers, etc..

6.6.10 **General support** - Ensure the workplace is sensitive to what has occurred, and that other employees react appropriately/support the victim.

6.6.11 **Feedback** - ensure individuals are kept appraised of any relevant developments, particularly with regards to any actions initiated to prevent recurrence.

7. **Personal safety considerations**

7.1 Being in control and avoiding risky situations are the best forms of defence. Whilst no guidance or procedure can guarantee the safety of every individual in every situation, there are numerous sensible precautions that can be taken to increase levels of personal safety, some of which are listed below.

7.2 These can be applied whether at work or not, and also apply to lone worker safety and to reducing the risks of work-related violence. Individuals should conduct risk assessments by assessing personal procedures and activities, and identifying where safety issues exist.
7.3 Individuals should never assume that “it won’t happen to them”. They should be advised to trust their instincts - if they feel scared or uneasy then they should act on it immediately. Their primary aim should be to get away if they feel threatened.

7.4 Risk assessment considerations

7.4.1 Whilst the full risk assessment process as per Risk Safety & Health’s - Safety Risk Assessment guidance should be carried out where significant personal safety hazards have been identified, much personal safety risk assessment has to be carried out by individuals as they go about their normal working day/life.

7.5 Personal control measures

7.5.1 Interacting with customers and the public

- Look confident - but not arrogant: Confident people are less likely to be attacked
- Smile and make frequent eye contact: A pleasant attitude makes a difference
- Be honest: Give reliable information, admit uncertainties, delays, etc., when they exist, and don’t hesitate to apologise if a mistake has been made
- Be consistent and fair: All customers should be treated equally and fairly
- Be efficient: Avoid keeping people waiting, if unavoidable keep them informed
- Ensure all customers are kept advised on how their individual issues are being addressed
- Avoid giving out personal information - be wary of people asking personal questions

7.5.2 Dealing with aggressive people

- Stay, or at least appear, calm - breathe slowly
- Be aware of your posture - try and appear relaxed. Avoid folding your arms, hands on hips, pointing, or other body language that could be interpreted as aggressive
- Avoid prolonged eye contact - do not try to “out stare”
- Keep your distance - avoid any physical contact
- Speak slowly, avoid long sentences, and keep your tone calm but confident
- Listen! The main problem may well be due to poor communication
- Negotiate where possible. Consider suggesting going to see a colleague if applicable
- Where applicable/practicable try to change the subject
- Call your supervisor/line manager/assistance if situation is deteriorating
- Report the incident if warranted
7.5.3 Dealing with abusive phone calls

- Advise the caller that it is the University’s practice not to prolong calls if abuse continues
- Ask caller for name and telephone number and arrange to call back at an agreed time
- Report incident if warranted

7.5.4 Meeting/Interviewing

- Avoid meeting people alone where possible
- Keep waiting times to a minimum, if there is a delay keep the visitor informed
- Make sure that someone knows who and where you are meeting/interviewing, make visitors aware that this information has been passed on
- Try and select a room that is visible to others, i.e. with windows, glass panels, and that is well lit. If you cannot be seen in the room devise a checking system with a colleague
- If you accompany a visitor to a room walk with him/her on the level, go in front when walking upstairs, and behind when walking downstairs
- Avoid standing while the person is seated during the interview/meeting - it gives an impression of crowding or superiority
- Avoid sitting directly opposite or at a higher level, which can be seen as confrontational
- Site your chair near a door - if possible use a room with two doors
- Make sure the person is returned to a public area following the meeting/interview.

7.5.5 Visiting people at their home or at other premises (e.g. Occupational Health Adviser visiting member of staff on long-term sick or industrial placement supervisor visiting student on placement)

- Is it necessary to “go to them”? Can they visit you at your premises?
- Where possible make an appointment - confirm by letter/telephone
- Where possible check the persons history prior to the appointment
- Assess whether two people should go instead of one, or whether police support may be required (either physically or at least via notification)
- Record the appointment, including details of person being visited and likely duration of visit, in the office diary, schedule plus, etc., ensuring others know where this is kept
- Follow any relevant procedures for monitoring movements outside the office (white board listing, charged mobile phones with emergency phone numbers programmed in, phone checks, personal alarms, etc.)
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear (suitable image whilst avoiding likes of high heels etc., that could hinder movement if a “fast escape” were required)
- Do not take unnecessary bags, cases, etc.
- Conduct visit/appointment during normal working hours if possible
- If driving find a safe place to park (facing out of a cul-de-sac, near a light after dark, etc.) close to where you are visiting
- Ensure you have your ID (preferably the University ID card) and, if necessary, your appointment letter
Assess the situation as you approach. If in doubt – get out
Check the name of the person and introduce yourself properly, clearly indicating where you’re from and the nature of the visit/appointment. If person you are supposed to meet is not available then do not enter
Do not enter if met with aggression at front door, or if person appears to be under the influence of drink or drugs
Try and conduct meeting at entrance or front of building/front room - always be aware of nearest escape route. Try and check how the door locks if you enter
Stay alert. Leave if there is a change of mood towards aggression or any sort of threat is sensed - trust your intuition. Do not respond to aggression with aggression – just leave
If another person enters the room re-assess the situation. If you are uncomfortable then politely terminate the visit and leave
Where possible avoid going from premises to somewhere else with a stranger. If unavoidable inform the office and/or a colleague of the changes, including details of the new destination, duration, etc.

7.5.6 When driving
Keep your vehicle serviced and check tyres (including the spare), oil, water, petrol, etc., especially before a long journey
Carry a torch, and consider carrying some warm, waterproof and/or high visibility clothing in the boot
Have enough petrol to complete your journey or fill up at a “known” service station. Carry a spare can of petrol
Consider joining a national breakdown organisation
Consider communications - ideally have a fully charged mobile phone, if not, at least have some change and/or a phonecard along with a list of emergency numbers
Plan your route in advance, have the necessary maps if applicable
Keep doors locked and windows/sunroofs closed so as far as is practicable - especially when in slow traffic, approaching traffic lights, junctions, etc.
Keep bags, briefcases, mobile phones and other valuables out of sight
Do not pick up hitchhikers, and avoid taking customers/other new contacts where possible
If you see an incident, or someone tries to flag you down, don’t stop without first thinking of your own safety
If approached when stopped, stay in your vehicle, keep the doors locked and engine running (if engine off - start it), and only open the window enough to talk through
If you think you are being followed try to alert other drivers by flashing your lights and sounding your horn, remain in, or drive to, the nearest built up area, and head for the nearest police station
When parking select a spot, so far as is reasonably practicable, that will allow easy egress (don’t “nosey park”, etc.), and is in a busy, well lit place. Park as close to where you are visiting as possible. If parking in daylight consider what it will be like after dark.
Always quickly check the inside of your car before opening the door.
Always lock your car, even if only in a garage forecourt paying for petrol, and secure any valuables in the boot. Leave no “attractive” items on display

7.5.7 When on foot
- Always be alert and aware of your surroundings - walk confidently
- As far as possible know where you are going - avoid taking shortcuts in unfamiliar areas
- Try and avoid walking alone at night
- Keep to busy, well lit, streets as far as possible. Avoid alleys, subways, etc.
- Walk on the right hand footpath facing oncoming traffic
- Conceal “attractive” items such as mobile phones, and consider what jewellery (including watches) are on display
- Avoid wearing personal radios/stereos - they reduce awareness and are attractive items
- Don’t carry excessive cash - carry wallets/purses securely (inside pockets, etc.)
- Consider your clothing - does it stand out? Can you run in it (high heels, etc.)?
- Be wary of stationary vehicles with the engines running and people sat in them
- Ensure fastenings on any bags or cases are secure
- Trust your instincts and avoid crowds or groups which may feel threatening.

7.5.8 When using public transport
- Have the correct change for the fare
- Know where you are going and which stop you need to get off at
- Avoid using buses and trains on your own at night where possible
- Where you do have to wait for a bus at night stand in a well lit place, preferably near other people, and, once on the bus, sit near the driver
- If alone on a train at night try and sit near other people, avoid empty compartments and compartments that have no access to corridors or other parts of the train, and if uncomfortable either get off at the next stop or switch carriages
- When getting off a bus or train late at night, or in an unfamiliar area, try and attach yourself to groups of people and walk purposefully towards your destination - better still, get someone to meet you

7.5.9 When using taxis
- Use a reputable/recommended taxi company, or hail a licensed cab
- When possible book by phone - consider getting the drivers name and/or vehicle details
- Do not get into a cab you haven’t asked for
- If possible share a cab with a friend - it’s both safer and cheaper
- Always sit in the back
- Have the fare ready before you reach the destination so that you can pay quickly
- If going home have your door key ready so that you can enter immediately.

Approved by the Safety Policy Committee - 11th March 2005
Managing personal safety risks at work

Guidance Note - March 2005

The Department of Risk Safety & Health brings together four related areas, namely the Risk Service, Safety Service; Occupational Health Service and the Internal Audit Service. Our function is to provide advice, information and guidance on all matters concerning risk, safety and health management at work for the managers and staff of the University.

About the Risk Service
The Risk Service is principally concerned with the development of risk management across the University through the achievements of the targets set in the annual HEFCE Accounts Directions. It is the aim of the Risk Service to embed risk management across the University through the development of school, service department and project based registers of risk and through training programmes. The Risk Service also has responsibility for developing the University’s first comprehensive Business Continuity Plan.

About the Safety Service
The Safety Service is concerned with the provision of advice, guidance and information to members of staff on a range of safety related issues which include; injury and accident prevention, improvements in safe working methods, the suitability of new equipment and work practices from a safety perspective, to provide information resulting from changes in relevant legislation, to be involved in risk assessments and to continually attempt to promote a culture of safety awareness.

About the Occupational Health Service
The Occupational Health Service is concerned with enabling the University to work towards a healthy and efficient workforce. Through health promotion, risk assessment and close liaison with all levels of staff and management, its aim is to encourage understanding of the effects of work on health and quality of life. By facilitating a range of services Occupational Health Service aims to ensure that the University complies with all legislative requirements in relation to employee health and welfare, but also to affect attitudes of both employer and employee to be more pro-active in their approach to health, safety and welfare.

About the Internal Audit Service
The Internal Audit Service are an independent function that provides an objective assurance service. Their aim is to help the University accomplish its objectives by evaluating the effectiveness of its risk management, control, and governance processes. The Internal Audit Service is provided by an external contractor.