



Lone Working and Out of Hours Working Policy

St George's, University of London

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Document History Table

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Rev 2	07.03.2024	Redrafted policy to conform with current standards	Hanif Brora (Assistant Director Safety, Health and Environment)
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1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to assist in the development of plans for those who may need to either work alone or work outside normal working hours and who may face higher risks than normal e.g. those working with hazardous chemicals, biological agents or equipment where there is a high likelihood of harm occurring or the work while safe under normal conditions could have serious consequences, should an abnormal situation occur, due to lone working.

Lone working could also include data analysis in between laboratory activities or entering the liquid Nitrogen store or other confined space, and off site activity such as research and visiting people's homes etc.

Note: Lone working in this document does not include general working from home.

2. Legal Requirements

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSAWA), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, and the SGUL health and safety policy the vice chancellor, relevant deputy vice chancellor, chief operating officer, professional services directors and institute directors, as employers are responsible for the health safety and welfare at work of their staff and the health and safety of those affected by their work.

There is no general prohibition on people working alone, but sometimes the law stipulates that at least two people must be involved in the work and specifies the safe system of work to be followed (e.g. live electrical working, trainees operating specified machines). In some cases exemptions are available, in others the law stipulates the standard of supervision to be provided (e.g. for young people undergoing training), and limit the extent to which people may work on their own.

Where there is no specific legal prohibition on working alone, the general duties of the HASAWA still apply. This requires the identification of the hazards, assessing the risks involved, and devising and implementing safe working arrangements for the work to be done safely by one person, or alternative arrangements providing help or backup must be used.

Staff, students' and researchers' responsibilities:

Under the HASAWA, staff and students have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their work and to cooperate with their line manager and colleagues to assist them in the discharge of their legal obligations.

It will be the employees' / students' responsibility to inform their line manager of the fact that they are intending to work alone.

2. Definition of Lone Working or Out of Hours working

Working alone can happen at anytime but the risks inherent in lone working after the university has officially closed will be greatly increased and this must be taken into consideration when undertaking the risk assessment.

Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff.

Lone workers are defined as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. While many individuals work alone in offices, this definition is intended to apply to those working with hazardous agents, hazardous equipment or in situations where lone working creates risks as stated above.

Out of hours working is defined as working either between 19.00 and 07.00 Monday to Friday and at any time during the weekends and bank holidays.

Students under the level of PhD are not permitted to work outside of normal hours 09.00 – 17.00 without direct supervision.

Post-graduate students may work outside the normal hours of 09.00 – 17.00 with the written permission from their supervisor. The student's supervisor or nominated deputy must be readily contactable in an emergency.

3. Safe Working arrangements for Lone / Out of hours Workers

Where a person may need to work alone or out of hours, it is the responsibility of the individuals' line manager / supervisor to ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is completed and that this is communicated to the individual.

Planning

It is important to plan ahead of any work taking place and ensure that foreseeable incidents or accidents are considered. The following points should be taken into account, it is however not an exhaustive list. Depending on the nature of the work there may be additional considerations needed due to very specific circumstances that may occur.

A risk assessment will help identify whether the lone worker can actually do the work safely.

This will include the identification of hazards from;

- machinery used;
- items handled;
- substances used;
- environment and atmosphere encountered;
- being outside or inside normal working hours;
- violence from others;

Particular consideration must be given to the following:

- does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- is there safe access and egress?
- can one person safely handle any temporary access equipment that is necessary such as portable ladders or trestles?

- can all the plant, equipment, substances and materials involved in the work be handled by one person safely?
- will money/ valuables will be handled and/or could there be a risk of violence?
- is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? check that the loan workers have no medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone, seek medical advice if necessary.
- consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.
- problems of communication
- emergency procedures
- access to a trained first aider
- knowledge of fire procedures and use of fire extinguishers

In some cases there may be a need for people's fitness to be considered. This may be due to a person being pregnant, having a condition such as diabetes or asthma or restricted mobility or a heart condition that could affect their ability to leave an area if an emergency occurs.

Lone working during normal hours within SGUL

- Does the work involve hazardous materials that could cause injury?
- Does the work involve hazardous equipment that could cause injury?
- Are there people nearby who can supply aid if an injury occurs?
- How will aid be summoned if there is a failure of critical equipment in use e.g. high speed or ultra-centrifuge, microtome, microbiological safety cabinet?

Out of Hours working within SGUL

- Does the work involve hazardous materials that could cause injury?
- Does the work involve hazardous equipment that could cause injury?
- How will aid be summoned if an injury occurs?
- How will aid be summoned if there is a failure of critical equipment in use e.g. high speed or ultra-centrifuge, microtome, microbiological safety cabinet?
- What happens if you become ill?

Special Activities

- Work with Radionuclides

People are not permitted to work with radionuclides without either the local Radiation Protection Supervisor (RPS) or the university Radiation Protection Officer (RPO) being on-site.

- Work with ACDP Biohazard Group 3 Agents

All works associated with CL3 labs must in addition follow the CL3 'Out of hours working' protocol.

A competent second person must be readily available on site if work is being undertaken with Biohazard Group 3 agents.

Special arrangements may also need to be made for the use of certain biohazard group 2 agents.

Risk Assessment and Procedures

All projects must have a risk assessment undertaken. The forms for undertaking [general risk assessments](#), [COSHH risk assessments](#) are available on the Safety, Health, and Environment [webpage](#).

Activities that could lead to problems should be identified on the risk assessment and spill procedures and emergency procedures put in place. The procedures should be clear and easy to follow and if necessary, a laminated sheet should be produced and placed in an easily accessible place.

It is advisable that the procedures are written in clear English and do not include multiple sub-points.

4. Training and Supervision

Following completion of the risk assessment, procedures must be produced and then communicated to all the individuals involved in the work.

The persons undertaking the work must have the hazards and risks involved in the work clearly explained to them. The precautions that they are required to undertake to stay safe and the limits of the work which can be undertaken must also be clearly explained.

Individuals must be trained in the safety precautions required. This may range from knowing how to shut down equipment, dealing with spills, knowing the fire exits within SGUL, who and how to contact in an emergency.

In some cases, supervision may be difficult due to the fact that lone working is taking place, however line managers / supervisors must make checks to ensure that staff or post-graduate students involved in lone / out of hours working are safe. The level of supervision will relate to the amount of experience individuals have of certain procedures. Line managers / supervisors must ensure that people are aware that while similar work may previously have been conducted, each situation has its own risks.

5. Registering for Lone Working / Out of hours working

Working out of hours within SGUL

Staff and post-graduate students should notify security that they are working out of hours. This can be done as follows:

A. Telephone

Staff and post-graduate students can telephone ext 2841 to notify security that they are working on site out of hours, providing their name, extension number and their location. If the telephone is busy individuals should try again at the earliest opportunity. Staff and post-graduate students must telephone security on ext 2841 when they have finished working so that security are aware they are leaving the site and they are signed out of the out of hours log.

B. In person

Staff and post-graduate students should sign the log held in the Security Control Centre behind reception after 19.00 if they are intending to stay on site after hours. Once individuals have finished working, they should sign out so that security are aware they are leaving the site.

6. Emergencies and Accidents

Lone working during normal hours within SGUL

If a situation arises where the worker feels that they could be in danger, they should leave the area and go to the nearest occupied office or lab. Should this not be possible, they should close the door and summon help via the telephone by calling 0909 on an internal phone or 0208 725 0909.

Out of Hours working within SGUL

If a situation arises where the worker feels that they could be in danger, they should leave the area and go to the nearest office or lab. Depending on the nature of the emergency, they should close the door and summon help via the telephone by calling 0909. If the emergency involves the spillage of material, they should evacuate the area and summon help from either security 0909 or the number given on their emergency plan.

7. Useful information

- 'Working Alone – Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working' <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>
- **3. Remote working guidance and expectations in the Flexible Working** (sgul.ac.uk)