Working Alone, in Isolation or from Home Procedure

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Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety, health and security of Department of Education and Training (the Department) employees who are working alone or in isolation, including working from home.

Scope

This procedure applies to all Department workplaces including schools and central and regional offices.

3. Procedure

## 3.1 Flexible Work Agreement

The workplace manager (line manager, principal) and / or their delegates (management OHS nominee, business manager, assistant principal) in consultation with employees are to put in place a mutual Flexible Work Agreement in accordance with the Department’s [*Working Remotely Guidelines*.](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Working-Remotely-Guidelines.docx) These Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Department’s [*Flexible Work Policy (Corporate Workplaces)*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Flexible-Work-Corporate-Workplaces.docx)and [*Flexible Work in Schools*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Flexible-Work-Proposal-Template-Schools.docx) available on the [*Flexible Work*](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/balance.aspx) webpage

The [*Flexible Work Agreement*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Flexible-Work-Agreement.docx)should be documented and signed by all relevant parties. The workplace manager and / ortheir delegate must assess the proposed Flexible Work Agreement against the workplace requirements.

Prior to commencement of a flexible work arrangement, the following provisions must be met:

* tasks performed must be relevant to the employee’s role and must not include work associated with potential health and safety risks
* safe access and egress to the work location must be available
* there must be no evidence of risk from fire, chemical or other environmental hazards in or near the workplace.

Employees entering into a Flexible Work Agreement are responsible for undertaking any improvements or modifications to the remote workplace based on the requirements in this policy and procedure.

In the event of any concerns raised in relation to the above provisions, further assistance should be sought from the **OHS Advisory Service on** **1300 074** **715** prior to proceeding or continuing with the proposed arrangements.

## 3.2 Management of Working Alone, in Isolation, from Home or After Hours

Prior to allowing employees to work alone, in isolation, from home or after hours, the workplace manager and / or their delegate must ensure a risk assessment is completed for specific hazards and documented on the [*Risk Assessment Template*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/riskassessmenttemplate.docx). This assessmentdetermines a risk score using the risk matrix (Refer to the Department’s [*OHS Risk Management Procedure*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/ohsriskmgtprocedure.docx)*)*.

The workplace manager and / or their delegate must also consider the following prior to authorising an employee to work alone, in isolation, from home or after hours:

* the level of supervision required for the employee/s to complete the task
* competency and level of experience, skill and training of the employee(s) undertaking the work
* the number of people present in the area after normal working hours
* the employee’s level of training in after-hours emergency procedures
* whether the substance, equipment or work is too hazardous or dangerous to be conducted after hours
* access to a method of communication, either landline phone or mobile phone
* security of the area where the work is to be performed
* method of access to the building from route of transport
* method of egress from the building and route to transport
* need for the employee requesting to working alone, in isolation, at home or after hours.

3.2.1 Competency of Employee(s)

The workplace manager and / or their delegate should determine the competency of the employee undertaking the work alone, in isolation, at home, or after hours. The assessment must be documented as part of the approval process and for OHS record keeping requirements. Only employees deemed competent for all the tasks required may work alone, in isolation or from home.

Employees with a life-threatening medical condition must, in writing seek the approval of the workplace manager prior to working after hours or alone. When considering such an application, a workplace manager must seek the opinion of the employee’s treating medical practitioner, must consider the views of that employee and utilise associated risk management forms to assess the level of risk as per the [*OHS Risk Management Procedure*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/ohsriskmgtprocedure.docx).

3.2.2 Review of After Hours Process, Procedures and Activities

The workplace manager and / or their delegatemust ensure that the names of all employees working alone, in isolation, from home or after hours are recorded in the [*Register of Employees Permitted to Work Alone or in Isolation*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/workaloneinisolationregister.docx).

The workplace manager and / or their delegatemust ensure that:

* as a minimum all employees complete the Department’s [*Workstation Risk Assessment template*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/ergonomicriskassess.docx) when setting up their workstation at home
* employees conduct regular inspections of the workplace where required using Department’s [*Workstation Risk Assessment template*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/ergonomicriskassess.docx)
* a three month period for the Flexible Work Agreement is trialled to assess the effectiveness of the arrangement and to provide an opportunity for fine tuning
* the Flexible Work Agreement is reviewed at least two weeks prior to the end date of the trial period in order to confirm the success or otherwise of the arrangements, confirm the continuation of the arrangements and to identify any changes that may be required
* the Flexible Work Agreement can be terminated at any time during the trial period (providing at least two weeks’ notice is given in writing) if an employee’s performance is unsatisfactory or the needs of the school / corporate workplace have changed or not been met.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to the workplace manager or their delegateor **OHS Advisory Service on 1300 074 715.**

3.2.3 Suggested Standard Types and Approval Levels

| **Level of Hazard Risk Rating** | **Suggested type of approval** | **Comments** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Low** | ‘Group Approval’ may be given for this type of work; e.g. a competent worker* Studying, working in computer labs, office or clerical work.
 |  |
| **Medium** | ‘Group Approval’ may be given for this type of work; e.g. a competent worker* Painting or drawing
* Video and picture production
* Working with small amounts of hazardous substances where the risk assessment identifies the risk is moderate.
 |  |
| **High** | ‘Individual Approval’ may be given to employees provided adequate controls have been implemented as described in legislation, a Compliance Code or Australian Standard. These documents identify current accepted work practices for high risk activities.High risk activities which may be identified include:* + operating equipment or machinery, including workshop machinery, capable of inflicting serious injury, such as lathes and power saws
	+ working with, or near, highly toxic or corrosive substances where there is a significant risk of exposure to the substance, taking into account the volume used
	+ using apparatus that could result in explosion, implosion, or the release of high energy fragments or significant amounts of toxic or environmentally damaging hazardous material
	+ working at a height over two metres e.g. climbing ladders
	+ working with exposed energised electrical or electronic system with powers exceeding 100 VA and voltages exceeding 40 V
	+ working with significant volumes of hazardous substances
	+ welding
 | Every effort should be made to reduce the level of risk to a low or moderate level.No approval will be given if a high risk rating still exists after controls are put in place. |

**4. Reporting incidents, injuries and near misses**

Any incidents, injuries or near misses while working alone in isolation or from home should be reported in eduSafe Plus as per the *Hazard and Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure.*

**5. Defined Terms**

Terms defined within this Procedure can be located on the Department’s [Defined Health, Safety Terms](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) website.

**6. Legislation, Codes of Practice, Standards and Guidance**

[*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*](http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/ohasa2004273/)

[*Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017*](http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_reg/ohasr2017382/)

[*WorkSafe Victoria ‘Officewise – A guide to health and safety in the office’*](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/officewise-guide-health-and-safety-office-handbook)

[*WorkSafe Victoria – ‘Working alone – Identifying and addressing risks’*](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/working-alone-information-sheet)

**7. Related documentation, webpages**

*[Department Flexible Work webpage](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/balance.aspx)*

[*Department’s Flexible Work Agreement Template*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Flexible-Work-Agreement.docx)

[*Department Working Remotely Guidelines*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Working-Remotely-Guidelines.docx)

*[OHS Risk Management Procedure](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/ohsriskmgtprocedure.docx)*

[*Register of Employees Permitted to Work Alone or in Isolation*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/workaloneinisolationregister.docx)

[*Risk Assessment Template*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/riskassessmenttemplate.docx)

[*Workstation Risk Assessment template*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/ergonomicriskassess.docx)

**8. Further assistance**

Further information, advice or assistance on any matters related to working alone, in isolation or from home is available by contacting the OHS Advisory Service on ph. 1300 074 715 or email safety@edumail.vic.gov.au.