

Occupational Health and Safety Self-evaluation Package

Acknowledgments

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Standard terms and definitions, as defined by Queensland health and safety legislation, have been incorporated throughout this publication. Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that their use does not breach the Copyright Act. The various publications of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety are acknowledged as providing useful reference material.

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AIM To provide all schools and other Education Queensland workplaces with a resource that will enable each site to evaluate its own performance in relation to health and safety.

Rationale

The process of workplaces evaluating their own health and safety performance supports the self-regulatory approach adopted in Queensland workplace health and safety legislation and the school-based management philosophy. If information and resources are provided to workplaces, they are better able to assess their situation, based on their having a more comprehensive understanding of their own systems and practices. Thus a determination can be made of the extent to which workplace health and safety is being managed in accordance with legislation and Education Queensland policies, procedures and guidelines.

Background

Education Queensland has previously developed and printed a Workplace Health and Safety Management Systems Audit. It comprises a principal's questionnaire and an employee's questionnaire. The documents were developed on the basis of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety (DWHS) Management Audit, and Compliance Audit programs.

Departmental policy and statewide legislation place responsibility and accountability on principals/officers in charge (OICs). There is a need to supply health and safety information and documentation to support these people in discharging their responsibilities. Principals/OICs need the tools to manage workplace health and safety according to their responsibilities, and the skills to develop strategies for increasing their health and safety performance.

The objective of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* is to prevent a person's death, injury or illness being caused by a workplace, by workplace activities or by specified high-risk plant. Effective consultation in the workplace is fundamental to the successful implementation of the provisions of this Act. Queensland workplace health and safety legislation and supporting documents assist industries to self-regulate through the provision of regulations and standards specific to workplace risks. Self-regulation is based on the principles of **risk management** (i.e. the identification of hazards, assessment of the associated risks, implementation of appropriate control measures and review of the effectiveness of the controls). This process is a logical and systematic approach to managing health and safety in the work environment.

The *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* requires the employer, employees and other obligation holders to proactively achieve compliance, which is regulated by the DWHS. The Act makes us all responsible for maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, by designating **obligations** on the following:

- employers;
- self-employed persons;
- persons in control of workplaces;

- principal contractors;
- designers, manufacturers, importers and suppliers of plant;
- erectors and installers of certain plant;
- manufacturers, importers and suppliers of substances;
- owners of specified high-risk plant;
- workers;
- other persons, e.g. members of the public.

Compliance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* enables the workplace to benefit because:

- employees know their rights, roles and responsibilities;
- established procedures are followed;
- employees are aware of contemporary health and safety issues;
- the department is committed to health and safety;
- site-specific workplace development is enabled;
- communication channels for all users are open;
- legal compliance is facilitated;
- financial, physical and personal loss or damage are minimised;
- an awareness of risks is developed.

Uses of a self-evaluation package

- A starting point for raising awareness of school health and safety issues.
- To monitor health and safety performance.
- To facilitate **implementation** of safety policies and procedures, that is, so that they do not only exist on paper.
- To identify health and safety training and information needs.
- As a health and safety training and development aid.
- To promote awareness of health and safety.
- To check the accuracy of health and safety perceptions.
- To determine the effectiveness of a workplace safety and loss prevention program.
- To establish a list of priorities to foster the progress towards best practice in the management of occupational health and safety.

Development of the package

The concept of the health and safety self-evaluation program arose from visits to schools and communication with principals. School personnel want **tangible and achievable guidelines**. Health and safety information was collected from the Workplace Health and Safety Act and Regulations, codes of practice/Advisory Standards, Australian Standards, Education Queensland policies, procedures and guidelines, DWHS documents, contemporary research and literature, previous audit documents and other legislation. By consolidating health and safety information on a wide range of issues that

involve schools, school personnel will be better able to manage health and safety issues, and put health and safety strategies into action.

This package was developed through consultation with school personnel and occupational health and safety personnel. It recognises the professional skills of teachers to assess the level of risk in a particular activity.

The content of this self-evaluation document aligns closely with that of the current systems audit document. The information included is simplified to enable workplace health and safety officers (WHSOs), workplace health and safety representatives (WHSRs) and principals to perform the evaluations. It includes the Risk Management Grid used by the DWHS during their audits of educational workplaces and facilities, as well as workplace environment issues relating to quality of working life, occupational violence, first aid and infection control.

Format

Workplace health and safety issues have been categorised into seventeen modules. These are:

1. Communication of Health and Safety Policy and Information;
2. Allocation of Responsibility/Accountability for Health and Safety;
3. Purchasing Controls;
4. Contractors;
5. Health and Safety Consultation;
6. Risk Management;
7. Manual Tasks;
8. Hazardous Substances;
9. Plant;
10. Workplace Environment;
11. Training;
12. Accident Reporting and Investigation;
13. Emergency Planning;
14. First Aid;
15. Infection Control;
16. Occupational Rehabilitation;
17. Workplace Stress.

Modules 1–5 deal with issues relating to the **management** of workplace health and safety. The emphasis is on the use of consultative structures in decision-making processes. These modules focus on the integration of occupational health and safety information into administrative functions.

Module number 6 gives a general overview of the process that is used to manage health and safety hazards in the workplace, that is, the **risk management** process. More specific hazards are addressed in detail in modules 7–10.

Training is an important means of increasing the knowledge and awareness staff have of occupational health and safety. Module 11 discusses the need for schools to incorporate training into their approach to workplace health and safety.

Modules 12 and 13 are concerned with administrative procedures and planning requirements for accident reporting and investigation, and emergency planning and management.

Planning the response, and responding, to injuries, illness and infections in the workplace are considered in modules 14 and 15. Rehabilitating injured or ill employees is dealt with in module 16. The issue of stress as a work-related illness that increasingly affects staff within Education Queensland is specifically discussed in module 17.

Overview of module components

Background information

Background information related to the topic of each module and guidelines on achieving compliance have been developed. These include information such as definitions of important terms, an indication of school personnel who should perform relevant tasks, and general points of interest about the module topic. The background information for each module follows a fundamental structure:

Module title

Topic statement

Background information

1. What is ... ?

2. Why do ... ?

3. Who does ... ?

4. How to do ... ?

Further information

This section of the module identifies resources and information specific to the module. Resources and information include legislation, audiovisual material, reference material and literature. Where possible a contact/reference person is identified.

Questions to answer

Each module includes a brief list of suggested questions to answer and identifies the personnel at the workplace who can help in completing this questionnaire.

These questions are designed to help in gathering information on the types of structures in the workplace. This information is essential to gain an accurate understanding of how the workplace stands in relation to each issue. Consultation with and feedback from staff will mean that the checklist for each module can be reliably completed.

Checklist

Within each module is a one- or two-page 'checklist'. This checklist is designed to determine a workplace's level of compliance and illustrate the types of workplace health and safety initiatives that should be pursued to achieve a higher level of performance. The checklist is set out in tabular form with a 0 to 5 scale running from non-compliance to best practice (refer to the table upper right). Each level contains a number of action statements or guidelines to be checked off. Each statement is designed to be practical and achievable. **All statements within a compliance level need to be achieved before that level's numeric rating is gained.**

Format of checklist

| Rating | Compliance level | Workplace practices |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 5 BEST PRACTICE | Best Practice | Procedures implemented for monitoring and reviewing all work practices. |
| 4 GOOD PRACTICE | Good Practice | Developing better practices and allocating responsibilities. |
| 3 COMPLIANCE | Compliance | Putting the procedures into operation. Promoting workplace |
| 2 ACHIEVING COMPLIANCE | Achieving Compliance | practices. Access to information |
| 1 INITIATING COMPLIANCE | Initiating Compliance | and some procedures in place. No information provided. |
| 0 NON-COMPLIANCE | Non-compliance | |

Guidelines

Some modules contain practical guidelines or proformas to help schools achieve compliance, or work towards best practice with legislation and departmental policy. As guidelines and other practical tools are developed, they will be forwarded to schools for inclusion within the package.

Graph and action plans

On completion of the modules, the self-evaluation performance graph can be used visually to compare the levels of compliance achieved in each module. Workplace health and safety issues can then be prioritised. By completing an action plan for modules of high priority, the specific actions and personnel required to improve compliance level can be clarified. Using action plans, sufficient resources (financial, time and personnel) can be allocated.

Guidelines for completing the self-evaluation package

This self-evaluation package has been designed on a best practice/compliance model — schools are to evaluate their level of safety performance against a scale from non-compliance to best practice. Based on staff numbers and the range of curriculum areas and resources, it is envisaged that **larger schools** (i.e. Band 8 and above) will be able to progress toward **best practice** in all modules over time. It is therefore reasonable to expect that **smaller schools** (i.e. Band 7 and below) should aim for **compliance** levels in all modules over time.

This self-evaluation package seeks to foster awareness in the workplace of health and safety requirements for staff, students and visitors. By placing the components into modules (1 to 17), the evaluation helps in the delegation of responsibilities and the management of workplace risks.

This package is designed to set achievable goals, and lists priorities to allow comparisons. Evaluation of health and safety within educational workplaces against criteria in the modules will allow schools to benchmark and work collaboratively. Workplaces can share procedures and strategies for achieving compliance in particular modules. Strengths and weaknesses within clusters may be balanced out by comparing performance and sharing information. An aim of this package is to provide a vehicle to determine common ground and prevent the 'reinvent-the-wheel' syndrome at every school.

Time factors have been considered and the package is designed to help workplaces meet legislative requirements by providing a tool to establish priorities and produce action plans. The package is designed to help school-based management deal with workplace health and safety in a strategic and progressive manner.

Steps to completing a module

1. Consult with appropriate staff (e.g. WH&S committee, WHSO, WHSR); identify appropriate legislation, policy, and accident and incident records to determine modules of highest priority.
2. Establish a method for evaluating priority areas. Various staff at the school can be delegated the responsibility for completing the modules.
3. Read information and guidelines provided with each module to gain a general understanding of the OH&S issue. If required, obtain the reference materials listed under 'Further information'.
4. Complete the 'Questions to answer' page provided with each module by asking the various members of staff suggested.

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
|  NON-COMPLIANCE | Are health and safety policies and information accessible? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | NO (rectify situation) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | YES (commence ticking in Compliance Level 1) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | For example: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DOEM policies, procedures and guidelines are easily accessible to personnel• personnel know about Education Queensland OH&S policy statement• general health and safety information available | |

5. Commence at the bottom of the self-evaluation checklist (i.e. Non-compliance: Level 0). Answer the question by referring to the examples listed. If **YES**, move on to Initiating Compliance: Level 1. If **NO**, put examples listed into action before moving on to Initiating Compliance: Level 1. Refer to the statement in **bold** that identifies the standard for Initiating Compliance.
6. Collate, document and graph information, and report findings to staff, the WH&S committee and possibly those in the cluster or relevant forum.
7. Document priorities and develop an action plan.
8. Set guidelines for monitoring, review and update.
9. Store completed self-evaluation documents for reference when district office staff or an inspector from the DWHS visit.

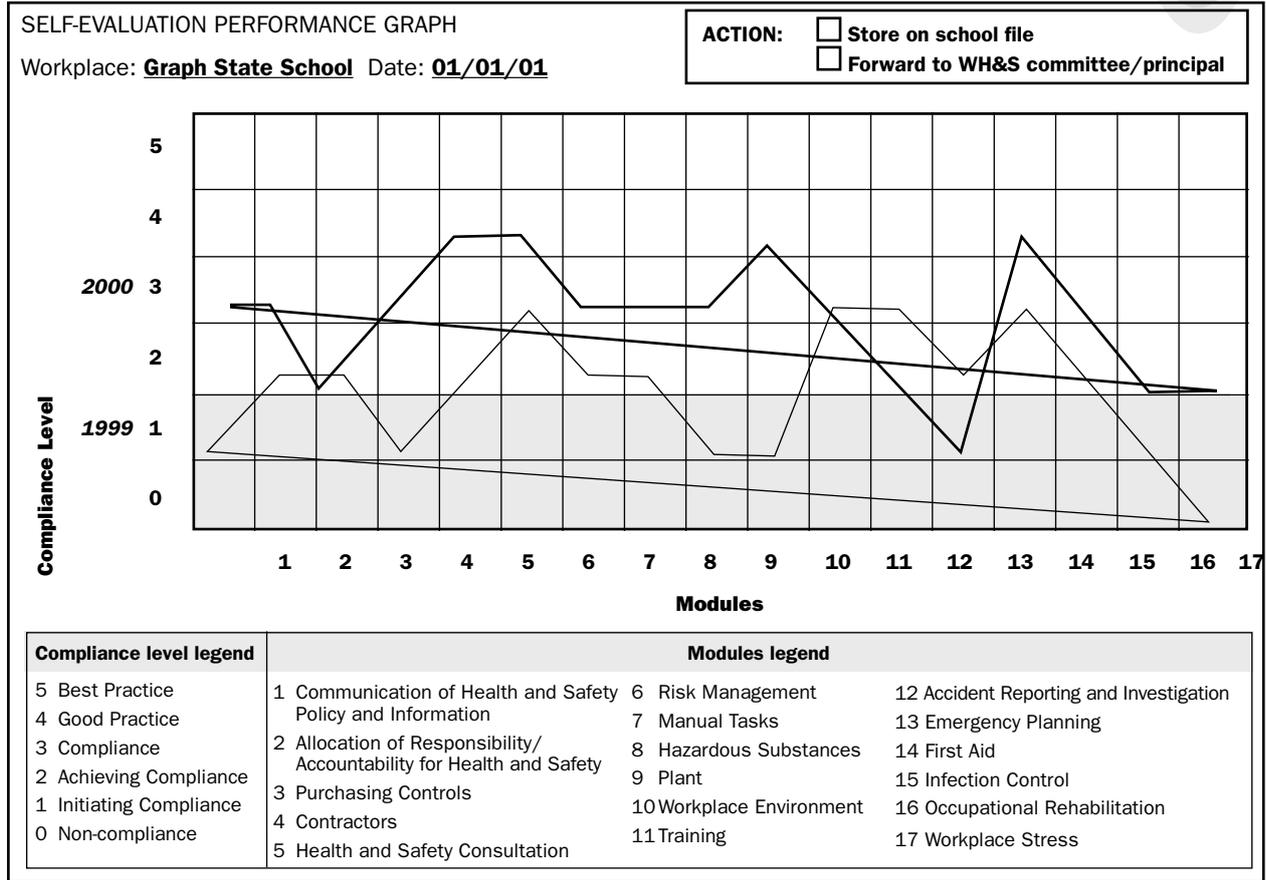
Additional information

Responsibility Statements

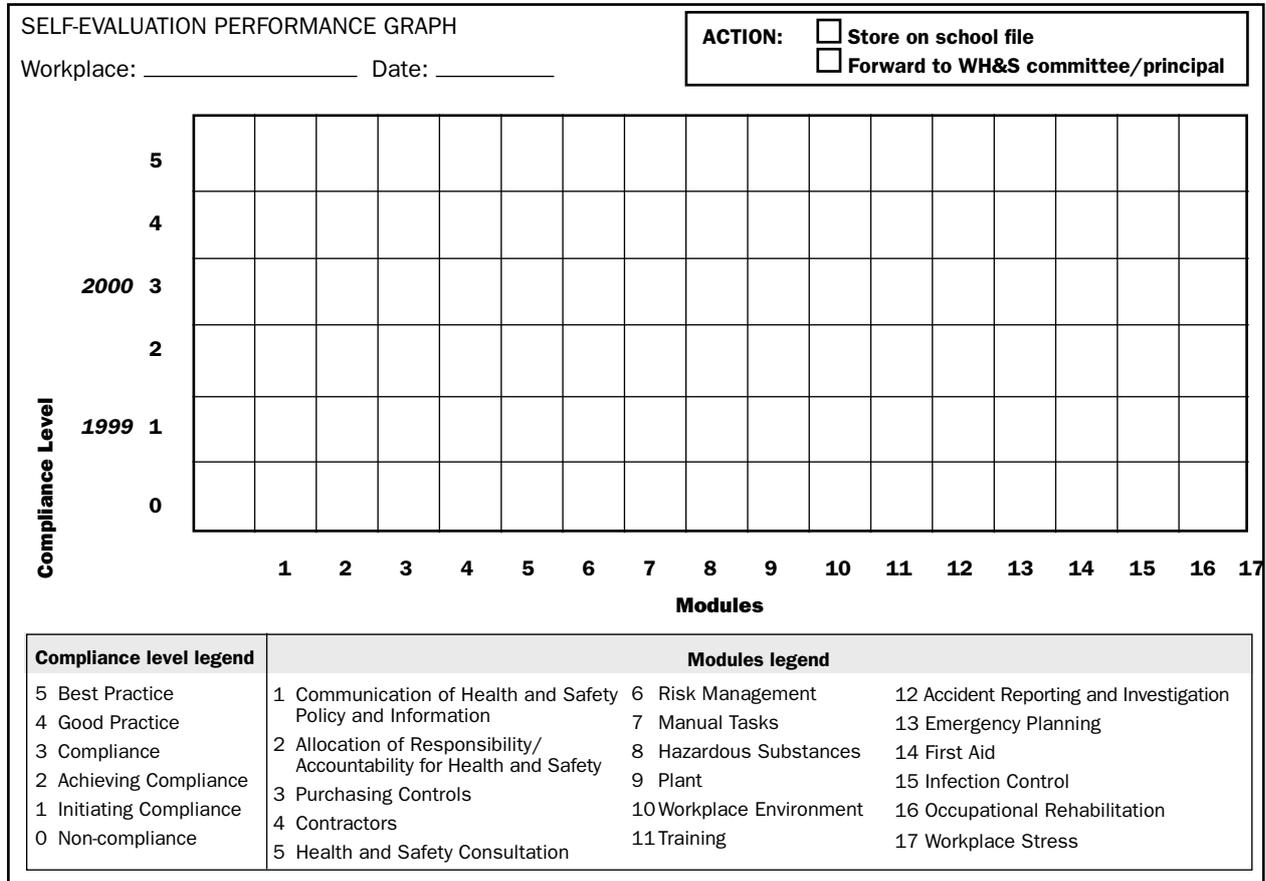
Responsibility statements can be found in Education Queensland policies, procedures and guidelines for principals, OICs and teachers. Responsibilities and accountabilities for workplace health and safety are expanded in *Workplace Health and Safety — Curriculum* (DOEM HS-10). The core module and activity modules outline responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. Specific functions and duties for WHSOs, WHSRs and WH&S committees exist within the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

School personnel should use all these sources and either adopt them or adapt them to the specific requirements of their workplaces. All personnel should be made aware of their obligations and should have easy access to all Education Queensland policies, procedures and guidelines. New personnel should be informed of their roles and responsibilities in relation to workplace health and safety as part of the school's induction process. By increasing the awareness of staff about their health and safety roles in the workplace, the implementation of workplace health and safety initiatives will be more achievable and integrated throughout the school community. Knowledge of your own obligations is imperative, as failing to perform your role due to **ignorance is not a defence** in prosecutions under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

Example graph



Example graph



Glossary of terms

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---|
| DOEM | Department of Education Manual (Education Queensland) |
| DWHS | Division of Workplace Health and Safety |
| EOG | Education Office Gazette |
| MSDS | material safety data sheet |
| PPE | personal protective equipment |
| WHSO | workplace health and safety officer |
| WHSR | workplace health and safety representative |

Definition of terms (legal)

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>risk</i> | the <i>Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995</i> defines risk as: risk of death, injury or illness. Risk of death, injury or illness can be established by determining the probability of exposure occurring, combined with the severity of the consequences. |
| <i>worker</i> | Section 11 of the <i>Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995</i> provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A person is a 'worker' if a person does work for or at the direction of an employer. This does not include work done under a contract for service.• A person may be a 'worker' even though the person is not paid for work done by the person.• However, a person is not a 'worker' merely because the person does work for an organisation of which the person is a member. |
| <i>workplace</i> | Section 9 of the <i>Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995</i> defines workplace as: any place where work is, is to be, or is likely to be, performed by a worker, self-employed person or employer. This includes schools, school campsites, district offices etc. |
| <i>workplace health and safety legislation</i> | <i>Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995</i> ; Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997; Workplace Health and Safety (Miscellaneous) Regulation 1995. |

Definition of terms (other)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>arena</i> | an agenda for discussion of issues and opportunity to agree on outcomes. Health and safety issues should be included as agenda items on existing forums i.e. staff meetings, Parents and Citizens' Associations, Facility and Grounds. |
| <i>hazard</i> | a source or potential source of injury or disease. |
| <i>hazardous substances</i> | generally, hazardous substances are considered to be chemicals or other products that can cause harm to those who may come in contact with them. |
| <i>management</i> | depending on the context, the term is normally broken into different workplaces, i.e. manager for a school is a principal. |
| <i>obligation</i> | a legal responsibility; the imposition of a duty of care on employers, workers, visitors, students etc. |