

Health surveillance in higher education

What activities might require surveillance?

Respiratory sensitisers

- Laboratory animals & insects
- Rosin-based solder
- Glutaraldehyde
- Wood dusts
- latex

Skin irritants/ allergens

- Aldehydes
- Solvents
- Detergents
- Gloves
- Metal-working fluids

Carcinogens

- R45 chemicals
- Asbestos

Physical Hazards

- Ionising radiation
- Noise
- Vibration
- Nano-particles

Biological hazards

- Hazard group 3 pathogens
- Genetically Modified organisms
- Enzymes
- Toxins

The threshold for surveillance

Required during work where:

- Identifiable adverse health effect related to exposure
and
- Reasonable likelihood this may occur under conditions of work
and
- Valid and acceptable technique for detecting the effect

COSHH Regulation 11

Health surveillance is not required where you are sure that there is no exposure or where the exposures that do take place are so rare, short and slight that there is only minimal risk of the employee being harmed.

HSG 61 para 12

Exposure in an Higher Education setting

Compared with industry:

- Quantities in use are small
- Exposure is often intermittent
- Duration of exposure is often short

BUT

- ...controls may be circumvented
- ...induction may be lax
- ...supervision may be poor

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Factors to consider

Vocational courses

- Exposure/ duration may be higher

Placements

- Less control

Level of study: UG ➤ MSc ➤ PhD

- Hazards & duration of exposure increases

Type of worker: maintenance vs. technician vs. researcher

- Different understanding and attitudes towards controls

Artistic freedom

- Low control