

Health and safety

As a teacher working in a school, institution or at home you should know your rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety.

Health and safety in the workplace

- The overall responsibility for health and safety rests with an employer. It is always recommended that the employee has an awareness of their rights so they know when requirements are not being met.
- Be aware of your workplace's health and safety policies and procedures:
 - the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire, bomb scares or any other such major incidents
 - first aid provision
 - accident reporting
 - the procedures for raising a health and safety issue.

Case study

Cameron teaches percussion at a secondary school on a contract basis through the music service. The teaching room allocated to him was messy, dimly lit with no heating. The Head of Music informed him no other rooms were available. He emailed his manager who contacted the school to explain that it was not acceptable for teachers to work under those conditions and that it was the school's responsibility to ensure the room was suitable to teach in safely. The school apologised and assured the manager that in future all visiting teachers would be given a suitable room in which to teach.

Risk assessment

If you are a self-employed teacher it is helpful to carry out a risk assessment that essentially lists all the tasks you carry out, the possible risks and what you should do to reduce or mitigate them.

Steps

- 1 Look for hazards. These may include such things as electrical equipment, noise exposure and trip hazards. Decide who might be harmed and how.
- 2 Evaluate the risk arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or if more should be done. Be sure to ask:
 - Can I eliminate the hazard altogether?
 - If not, how can I control the risk so that harm is unlikely?
 - Record your findings.
- 3 Review your assessment from time to time and revise if necessary.

Summary

- Carry out a risk assessment of your working environment.
- Your employer has an obligation to provide a safe environment for you to work.
- Get to know your workplace's health and safety policies and procedures.
- Use your MU Regional Office as the first point of contact for assistance and guidance with Health and Safety issues.