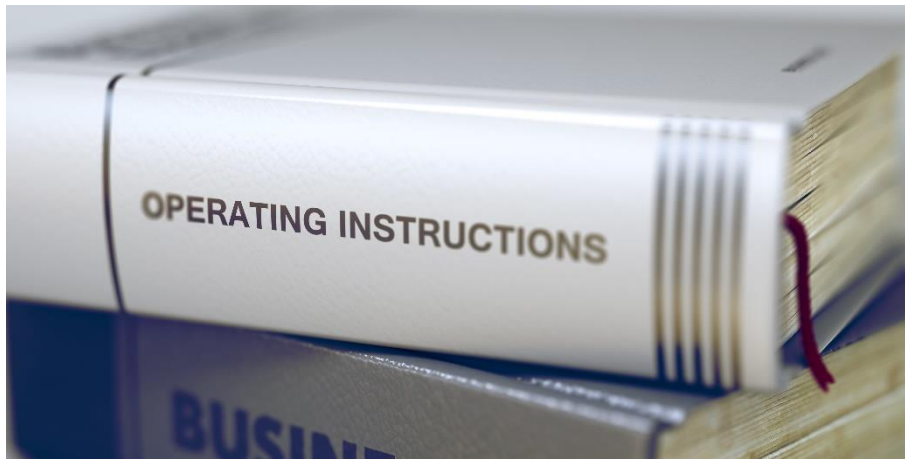




ARBEJDSMILJØSEKTIONEN
AALBORG UNIVERSITET

Do what I say!

GOOD ADVICE ABOUT HANDLING THE INSTRUCTION
OBLIGATION AT AALBORG UNIVERSITY



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The Working Environment Section
AALBORG UNIVERSITY

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Intro

Our knowledge, our skills, and our competencies together constitute our prerequisites for work.

Rarely do we acquire these prerequisites solely by reading books or manuals – more often, we gain them through training and instruction. We might call it something else: education or practice, but fundamentally, someone has told or shown us what to do.

Training and instruction in performing work are not only beneficial for achieving a desired work result but are also often a prerequisite for working safely, ensuring that no one suffers harm or gets injured. In some cases, it's even essential that someone keeps an eye on us while we work, preventing mistakes or actions that could be dangerous to ourselves or others.

According to the Danish occupational health and safety legislation, every employer – including Aalborg University – has a duty to provide training and instruction to their employees and to conduct supervision. This collective responsibility is known as the obligation of instruction and supervision, or simply **the instruction obligation**. It is a central obligation – some would say the most crucial one in occupational health and safety legislation.

But how should the instruction obligation be fulfilled at AAU? What does it entail specifically? Who should train whom? What needs to be said or done? How should it be documented?

You can find answers to all these questions in these GOOD ADVICE guidelines. If you have any doubts, feel free to contact the Work Environment Section at arbejdsmiljoesektion@adm.aau.dk.

Enjoy reading! 😊

Mastering the terms

By the term **training**, you should understand a process in which a person acquires knowledge and practices skills to perform their work safely and healthily.

- Example: Learning to operate a centrifuge safely, lifting heavy boxes properly, and ensuring safety during interviews with agitated psychiatric patients are all instances of training.

By the term **instruction**, you should understand a targeted message or an order on how a person should carry out specific work phases.

- Example: The instruction “remember to pour acid into water – not the other way around” and the directive “do not place the boxes in the escape route” both fall under the term instruction

By the term **supervision**, you should understand the control of whether work is actually performed properly and in accordance with training and instruction.

- Example: Checking that students’ experimental setups won’t result in a short circuit or verifying the use of suitable gloves during work with hazardous chemicals are both examples of supervision.

WHO should receive training and instruction at AAU?

As an employer, Aalborg University (AAU) primarily has an obligation to provide instructions to its **own employees**. It is mainly the university’s staff members that carry out work at AAU.

However, there are others besides employees who perform work or work-related activities at AAU. For instance, **guest researchers** and **guest Ph.D. candidates** that conduct teaching and research for AAU or **students** that uses AAU’s workshop and laboratory facilities for practical study activities or conduct fieldwork.

For such activities, AAU’s management has decided that **you should fulfill the instruction obligation in the same manner as for work performed by AAU employees** – specifically when the work or activity falls under AAU’s managerial responsibility. This approach makes sense because non-employees can be just as susceptible to accidents or causing harm to others in AAU’s laboratories and workshops.

Employees from service companies commissioned to work at AAU should, in principle, receive instructions from their own employers, possibly based on information provided by you.



At AAU, student activities in laboratories are covered by the instruction obligation.

WHO should you have a special focus on?

It is important to consider who has the greatest need for training, instruction and supervision.

Individuals who already have **good knowledge, practical skills, and competencies** for performing work properly naturally require less training, instruction, and supervision than those with limited qualifications for the same work. Therefore, pay special attention to:

- Individuals with **no or limited prior experience** in practical work, such as students.
- Individuals with expected **limited familiarity** with the conditions at AAU, such as new employees—even if they may have experience with similar work from previous employment.
- Individuals who **do not speak or understand Danish well** and may have limited knowledge of English.



Peer-to-peer training.

Also, remember that people are different. For example, not all students are the same—some have years of relevant experience, while others have very limited practical experience. You may need to assess the need for instruction individually and tailor it accordingly. Be especially mindful of this when instructing multiple people simultaneously, such as in group teaching.

WHAT should you particularly focus on?

Instructions are particularly important if incorrect operation or other inappropriate actions can make the work dangerous.

Therefore, you should pay special attention to work situations **where the risk of injury is high**. This typically applies to work situations where there may be a significantly increased likelihood of accidents for inexperienced individuals and/or where the health consequences of an accident can be serious. Or it may involve work situations that entail significant health risks over an extended period of time.

Examples of work at AAU that **may** involve high risk include:

- Working with hazardous substances and materials, such as carcinogens, toxic, or corrosive chemicals.
- Working with biological agents that pose a risk of serious disease transmission.
- Operating dangerous machinery.
- Working with high voltage or strong currents.
- Engaging in tasks that involve heavy lifting, carrying heavy objects, and/or pushing and pulling heavy loads.
- Performing work with a risk of falling from height.
- Work that entails the risk of exposure to violence or threats.
- Work that entails specific risks for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Working in hazardous weather conditions or extreme climatic or geographical environments.



Working with biological agents can in some cases involve high risk.

It is not a complete list.

For work with increased risk, it is often important that training and instruction are **repeated regularly** or **periodically**, especially when it is not possible to establish and maintain good routines in the work. Furthermore, it is crucial that you carefully follow up on training and instruction and supervise how work is actually carried out.

If you are unsure whether a specific work situation involves high risk, it may be necessary to assess this through a **risk assessment**. For certain types of work, risk assessment is a legal requirement regardless. This applies, for example, to work with hazardous chemical compounds, where a risk assessment called “Chemical Workplace Assessment” (Kemisk APV) must be conducted. A chemical APV also serves as a written basis for providing instructions, such as appropriate protective measures during work

HOW should you carry out training, instruction and supervision?

The obligation to provide instructions can be fulfilled in several ways. The crucial aspect is that training and instruction are well organized to achieve the desired outcome. The same applies to supervision.

First and foremost, it is essential that you conduct training and instruction **before** work begins. Otherwise, the preventive purpose may be missed. Similarly, it is important to carry out supervision **while** work is ongoing and/or just before it commences. It makes no sense to supervise a task or study activity once it has been completed.

In practical planning, ensure the following

- **Be well-prepared**
The recipient of instruction goes through a learning process. All learning requires a good learning environment: a suitable physical setting, quietness, and enough time.

- **Provide oral instruction – backed up by written material**

Simply handing out a manual, for example, is usually not sufficient for training or instruction. While written material is valuable – and often legally required – it should rarely stand alone. The content should be conveyed orally – and, of course, kept up-to-date and accessible afterward through notices, signs, or on a website.

- **Be systematic – precision is a virtue**

Instruction can take the form of a conversation or Q&A, but maintaining an overview is essential to ensure that everything that needs to be said is covered – comprehensively and accurately. Consider using a checklist. Set expectations and goals for the instruction. Also, provide reasons for the instruction – understanding the dangers leads to better comprehension of protective measures.

- **Be oriented towards practise**

While theoretical knowledge is valuable, most people learn best by doing. Allow participants to try things out for themselves.

- **Check understanding**

After instruction, let the recipient demonstrate their ability to work safely. This ensures they have correctly understood the instruction.

- **Consider documenting instructions**

While there is no general requirement for documentation of training, instruction, and supervision at AAU (Aalborg University), it is often useful to do so, especially for tracking who has received instruction and who hasn't.



Training in the use of a panel saw

WHO can take on the role of instructor?

As an instructor, you exercise leadership.

Others besides leaders can provide instruction, but since you are fulfilling an employer obligation, it is essential that there is a **managerial mandate for the instructional task**. Heads of departments delegate instructional authority to employees – based on recommendations from the occupational health and safety organization.

In other words, it must be clear who can provide training, instruction, and supervision, especially for hazardous work. This applies regardless of whether the instructor is a mentor, a laboratory supervisor, a team colleague, or someone else.

More to read

You can read more on the subject in:

- **Rules for working environment in workshops og laboratories (RAVL)**
RAVL is an addendum to AAU's working environment policy and describes, among other things, the delegation of instructional powers.
- **Rules for working environment during field work (RAF)**
RAVL is also an addendum to AAU's working environment policy and describes, among other things, the delegation of instructional powers.
- [At-vejledning om oplæring, instruktion og tilsyn med arbejdet](#)
The Danish Working Environment Authority's guidance provides information on the most important requirements for training, instruction and supervision. Note that the guide refers to other guides on the same topic. The guide is in Danish only.
- [BFA-vejledning om introduktion, instruktion, oplæring og tilsyn](#)
BFA-I's guidance contains a toolbox with inspiration for how the instruction and supervision obligation can be carried out in practice. The guide is in Danish only.
- [BFA-faktaark om instruktion og oplæring af nyansatte](#)
This fact sheet provides a concise outline of the most important requirements (in Danish only)
- [BFA-guide: Den gode modtagelse](#)
Inspiration for introductory courses in higher education. Training and instruction can be part of an introduction course (in Danish only).

Inquiries about this document can be directed to the Working Environment Section:
arbejdsmiljoesektion@adm.aau.dk.

AAU - Arbejdsmiljøsektionen, oktober 2021, updated may 2024

Lab-manual: "Er du i tvivl, så spørg din vejleder."

Vejleder: "Det der kan jeg ikke lige huske. Hvad står der i lab-manualen?"