

FROM PROBLEM TO ACTION

GOOD ADVICE ON PREPARING AND FOLLOWING UP ON ACTION
PLANS TO IMPROVE THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT



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Introduction

The work to improve your colleagues' working environment often requires planning, especially when working environment problems must be remedied over time through actions or activities that involve several of your colleagues or external advisers.

Drawing up action plans is an integral part of any APV process but can also be relevant for all types of working environment work. The preparation of action plans takes place when you have mapped the working environment in your department - and have described and assessed the problems you have found.

But what characterizes a good action plan? What are the requirements for an action plan? Who should be involved in the work? How can you follow up on whether the plan leads to the intended results? How can you tell your colleagues about the progress of the plan?

You will find answers to these and other questions in this document, which has the status of GOOD ADVICE and is addressed to Aalborg University's work environment organization (AMO).

What is an actionplan?

Your action plan is the result of your planning of the measures you intend to implement to improve the working environment for your colleagues. The action plan describes **what** you want to do, **when** you want to do it and **who** is responsible for doing it.

According to Danish legislation, an APV action plan must always be **in writing** - it is a physical or electronic document that you must be able to present on request. At Aalborg University (AAU) you must use a mandatory action plan template, which, if used correctly, will contain the information required by law.

AAU's action plan template is designed to support updating the plan at appropriate intervals, thereby ensuring that the plan reflects the progress of the work. You can e.g. indicate that an initiative has been started or that it has now been completed - and state whether the intended results have been achieved.

Your action plan is also the document you must use in your communication with your colleagues about your working environment work. In the APV context, the plan also constitutes the documentation that you have made an APV in your department.

Together, all action plans are AAU's collective documentation for fulfilling the working environment legislation's requirement to carry out a workplace assessment (APV). As a result, you must send your current action plans to the Working Environment Section (AMS) at set times. AMS uses the action plans to keep AAU's top management and the Main Working Environment Committee (HAMiU) informed about the systematic working environment work at AAU. The Rector and the Executive Board, in consultation with HAMiU, have the overall responsibility for the university's working environment work.

After receiving your plans, AMS also has the opportunity to give you feedback on your planning.

APV HANDLINGSPLAN					
Instituttidstilling		Instituttet for Arbejdsmiljø Forskning		Bemærkninger:	
Aktuel version (dato)		10.11.2023		Dokumentation	
Næste planlagt opdatering (dato)		10.11.2023		Dokumentation	
Godkendt af AMS (dato)		10.11.2023		Dokumentation	
OBS! For vejledning - læs noter til kolonnerne					
Beskrivelse og risikovurdering		Plan for afhjælpning (indsatsplan)		Plan for opfølgning	
Problembeskrivelse	Aktuel planstatus	Beskrivelse af handling/aktivitet	Successkriterier/mål	Beskrivelse af opfølgning	Problemet løst?
Problemet har ikke et præcist mål, der kan måles og beskrives. (Dette er en fejl, der skal rettes i problemet)	(Gang)	Problemet har ikke et præcist mål, der kan måles og beskrives. (Dette er en fejl, der skal rettes i problemet)	Problemet har ikke et præcist mål, der kan måles og beskrives. (Dette er en fejl, der skal rettes i problemet)	Problemet har ikke et præcist mål, der kan måles og beskrives. (Dette er en fejl, der skal rettes i problemet)	Problemet har ikke et præcist mål, der kan måles og beskrives. (Dette er en fejl, der skal rettes i problemet)
Størrelse	Vurderet	Præcist	Ansvarlig	Tidspunkt for opfølgning	Ansvarlig
Stor	Lang tid	A	10.11.2023 - 10.11.2024	10.11.2023 - 10.11.2024	10.11.2023 - 10.11.2024

Who shall prepare your actionplans?

The responsibility for making your action plans rests with the manager responsible for the working environment, typically the Head of Department or the FS deputy director, in collaboration with your local Working Environment Committee (AMiU/SAMiU).

You choose yourself whether you want to carry out the planning at meetings in the committee or entrust the planning to a task group or to individuals who refer to your committee. It may possibly depend on the size of your department or how extensive the work of processing data from the working environment mapping is.

Formally, the work entails that action plans must be presented, either within the coverage area of each working environment group, for each sub-department/section or for the entire department. These plans are presented to the committee when they are ready, and then the manager responsible for the working environment, in consultation with the committee, decides to implement them. This is entered into the meeting minutes.

It is of course important that the people who have been given the task of implementing the plans are familiar with their task and the deadline for carrying it out.

The legislative requirements for the content

In 2024, the rules in the Working Environment Act on workplace assessment were reformulated, which has primarily aimed to strengthen the focus partly on the APV action plan and the preparation for this, partly on the follow-up of the actions initiated.

As a result, it is now more clearly described which **elements** an APV process must include and what an action plan must contain:

1. Risk assessment

"A risk assessment of the company's working environment problems. The risk assessment must be carried out on the basis of a mapping of the company's working environment conditions."

2. Action plan

*"A written action plan for resolving the working environment problems that cannot be resolved immediately. The action plan must include a description of the **nature, severity, scope and causes** of the problems, as well as information on **when** and **how** the identified problems must be resolved, including **who is responsible** for implementing the solutions."*

3. Implementation and follow-up

"Implementation of the action plan and follow-up on the measures initiated, including follow-up on whether the solutions initiated are adequate and effective."

The text in italics directly quotes (in translation) the legislative requirements.

Overview of the content

It is appropriate to gather the documentation for all 3 required elements in one document – namely the action plan. AAU's action plan template will if used correctly, ensure that your plan meets the requirements of the legislation.

Table 1 on the next page provides an overview of the content of an action plan. Use if needed the table as a checklist, so you are sure that your action plan meets the requirements. In addition to the table, you can use the examples in the action plan template.

It is particularly important that you elaborate on the description of the **nature, seriousness, scope and causes** of the problems - as well as **when** and **how** they must be resolved. Note that there is a direct correlation between the description of the seriousness of the problems and your risk assessment. Furthermore, you must make something out of your description of your **follow-up**. Remember that your action plan is a document that must be read and understood by others, including AAU's top management and the Working Environment Authority.

Table 1. This must be included in your actionplan.

Descriptions	Content	Remarks
Problem description (intervention area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature What kind of problem have you found in your dialogue-based mapping? • Severity The result of your risk assessment. • Scope Who and how many are affected by the problem (individuals, teams, sections, etc.)? • Causes What are the causes of the problems? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remark. If you have used questionnaires or checklists for the mapping, a rendering of categories or themes from this will be sufficient. It is not necessary to have a detailed analysis of each problem in the action plan. It is better with a concise but easily understandable description, if possible. Examples include: - Large workload and time pressure - Offensive actions - Ergonomic load (MSB) - Indoor climate • Remark. Describe this in words or use a risk scale, e.g. high, medium, low. You do not need to give a detailed account of the methodology behind your risk assessment. • Remark. Be careful not to be too specific in the description, especially when it comes to psychosocial problems that only a few are affected by. Avoid 'exhibiting' individuals. • Remark. If you do not know the causes, they should be investigated further. This too must be described in the action plan.
Description of action/activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions/activities Listing of the remedial action(s) that are intended to be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remark. As far as possible, remedial actions must be directed at causes – not symptoms. Ensure an understandable connection between the problem description and the action description.



Description of succescriterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Succescriterion/goal What results should the remedial actions lead to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remark. Be as specific as possible so that you can follow up on whether the results are achieved. Avoid unclear wording such as 'discussed at management meeting' or 'ongoing process'.
Description of follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up List of the activity(s) that you intend to carry out in order to follow up in your remedial action(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remark. It is important that these activities are described and implemented in practice. Only through follow-up can you check that you have reached the goal (fulfilled the success criterion) for your work. A tip: use same method for follow-up as you used for the mapping. Did you use e.g. an interview method, so interview those affected again and ask them if the problem has been resolved.
Description of deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time planning Start and end times for your remedial actions as well as your follow-up activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remark. Be specific and realistic. Remember that your plan has created expectations among your colleagues. They must therefore know when something happens in relation to the problems experienced.
Description of responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for the action plan List the individuals who are responsible for the remedial actions and the follow-up activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remark. Be precise about who is responsible for the task. Avoid vague group designations - such as 'the management', 'AMiU' or 'all'. The person responsible for the task must typically keep the action plan up to date - and indicate the status of progress in the plan.

Be realistic and concrete

A good action plan is realistic and concrete. It is 'spot on', so you don't risk wasting time with ineffective and perhaps irrelevant measures.

It is important that you find solutions that you can put into practice and that clearly address the problems that you want resolved. If you can't do that, you will easily create expectations that you cannot fulfill.

As mentioned in **Table 1** above, you must avoid using vague and unclear wording in your action plans. Avoid e.g. phrases such as '*there must be more focus on the subject going forward*' - or '*we must remember to help each other*'. Describe exactly what you want to do.

When it comes to problems that you cannot resolve yourself, use the action plan to describe what you will do next. For example, you must report building errors and deficiencies to Campus Service via AAU Building Support. Describe it in the action plan and then coordinate with Campus Service when and how your problems will be solved.

Something similar applies if you entrust the handling of the problem to an external consultant, whom you ask to take care of a process on your behalf. External consultants are often used in connection with agreements that you have entered with the Working Environment Authority, a so-called **process agreement**, which the authority offers instead of orders. In these cases, you should expect the authority not to be content with unclear objectives - and a lack of follow-up on whether the working environment problems have been resolved. The authority will see concrete results.

Remember to be realistic in relation to time and resource consumption. It does no one any good if you take on too much, e.g. by making so many plans that you don't have the time or money to carry them out. Put **quality** before **quantity**.

The success of an action plan depends on the achieved improvements to the working environment - not on the good intentions.

6 points on action plans

1. **Start with the simple, self-evident resolutions.**
Don't make plans for the sake of plans.
2. **Find common resolutions to common problems.**
Keep the work manageable and the number of plans down.
3. **Make a clear prioritization.**
Avoid taking on too much, put quality before quantity.
4. **Get help with difficult problems.**
Do not carry out actions on your own that require expert knowledge.
5. **Think about what your actions should lead to - and follow up.**
Do not think that your actions will automatically have the intended effect.
6. **Tell your colleagues about your work.**
In their world, nothing happens if they don't hear anything else.

A document that everyone should be able to find

§ 15a. [...] The action plan [...] must be available in the company and accessible to company managers, work supervisors and other employees and the Working Environment Authority. This is what the Working Environment Act says.

Your action plan is the central documentation for your APV work. Therefore, the action plan must be accessible to everyone, e.g. on a website. Also remember that the Working Environment Authority often wants to make sure that you have made an APV, and therefore wants to see the action plan.

If you cannot present your action plan, it is the same as it has not been made.

The important conveyance

In the dialogue-based mapping, you were very visible to your colleagues. You asked them to fill in a questionnaire, you conducted interviews or carried out other forms of dialogue – and thereby required the active participation of your colleagues. Thereby, an expectation has been created that you are equally visible in relation to the action plans.

The action plan work takes time - and since it is typically a limited group of people who are involved in bringing the plans to life, it is easy for your colleagues to get the feeling that nothing is happening - especially if they do not receive information about what actually happens.

Therefore, it is important to consider how you will repeatedly inform your colleagues about the progress of the action plan work.

It can be done well in several ways. It is a good idea to make something special out of the communication, as the unusual can help maintain your colleagues' awareness of the APV process and its importance. Good communication also helps to make your local working environment organization visible.

Use the communication method that suits you best. Staff events, meetings and websites are obvious possibilities, whereas email information tends to be overlooked and forgotten - and therefore should not be the only means of communication.



Consider conveyance as part of the work with the action plans. It's recommended to make a calendar planning of your communication.

References

The documents below can be found by searching the web:

- **Action plan template (mandatory)**
- **Aalborg University's working environment policy**
- **Working environment organization at AAU**
- **Risk assessment of work environment problems**

Inquiries about this document can be directed to the Working Environment Section:

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