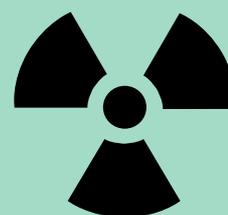
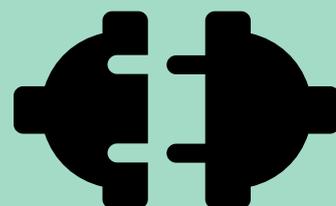


TIPS

Workplace assessment (APV) at AAU

A good action plan



The good action plan

Introduction

When your workplace assessment mapping is finished, your work on the action plan can start. This is where you analyse the problems that the mapping process has identified. You must select and prioritise solutions and plan how and when these should be implemented. Then you must decide how to follow up to determine whether the solutions have produced the desired results.

These pages will guide you through what makes a good action plan, how to organise your work on action plans, how to tell your colleagues and employees about this work, and the general requirements for action plans.

These hints and tips should be read in conjunction with 'A good mapping process'.

What is an action plan?

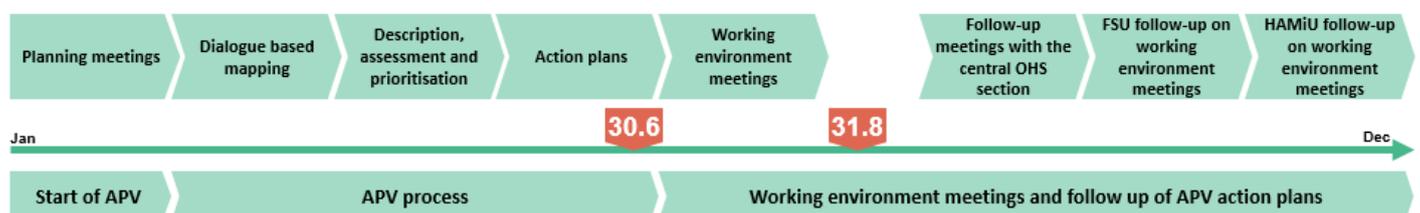
Your action plan sets out the actions you intend to take to focus on essential health and safety issues.

An action plan is always written – it is a physical or electronic document, which you must be able to produce on request. At AAU, we use a mandatory action plan template that includes the following:

- A description of the problem or the priority area to be addressed
- A description of the solution or action to be taken
- Whose responsibility it is to carry out the action
- A date and time or schedule for completing the action
- A description of success criteria and activities to determine whether the action has had the desired effect.

The action plan is the document that you should use in discussions with your colleagues and employees about work related to the workplace assessment. The action plan also serves as evidence that you have carried out a workplace assessment in your department or unit. Together, all action plans constitute AAU's documentation of compliance with the requirements of working environment law to make a workplace assessment.

You must also send your action plans no later than 30.6 to the central section for occupational health and safety.



Who should make your action plans?

The responsibility for making your action plans lies with the manager responsible for working environment/health and safety – typically the head of department or head of unit – in collaboration with your working environment committee or your works council and working environment committee in units that have these. The manager responsible for the working environment chairs the committee (AMiU).

You can work on action plans in the AMiU or delegate the work to a small working group, depending on the amount of work needed to process data from the mapping.

Draft action plans should be made, which you can then discuss and amend where necessary at a meeting of the working environment committee or in the respective teams, depending on how the mapping was done. It is important for the AMiU to agree on the final content of the action plans. When the action plans are ready, the chair of the committee decides on their implementation. This should be recorded in the minutes.

6 tips for action plans

1. Start with the simple solutions that are right in front of you

- do not make plans just for the sake of it

2. Find common solutions to common problems

- keep the work manageable and the number of plans to a minimum

3. Establish firm priorities

- do not bite off more than you can chew; put quality before quantity

4. Get help with difficult health and safety issues

- do not take actions on your own initiative if they require expert knowledge

5. Think about what your actions are meant to achieve – and follow up

- do not expect your actions to have the desired effect automatically

6. Tell your colleagues and employees about your work

- in their world, nothing happens unless they hear otherwise



First, you should describe and assess ...

Before you can make an action plan, you need to process the results or insights that the mapping has provided. This should enable you to describe the areas that need further work.

Assess whether you have come across issues that can be remedied right away without making an action plan. For example, if an employee is sitting on a defective office chair, it is not usually necessary to spend time making a plan to get it changed. You should also examine whether some of the issues are so similar that they can be described as one priority area and addressed together.

Also assess whether you have the necessary skills to tackle all of the issues, or whether you need expert assistance from outside or from the Working Environment Section.

You must then prioritise ...

In many cases, it is unrealistic for you to try to address all of the priority areas at once. It is therefore necessary to prioritise your efforts: What should be addressed first – and what will have to wait?

The problem description will often make it clear which areas should be tackled first. For example, it is clear that problems that have a negative and significant impact on those affected will call for a more urgent solution than others.

However, if you are in doubt, you can consider the following priority formula:

Priority = Severity x Number affected x Ability to do something about the problem

The formula is not to be used in mathematical calculations, but it describes the factors that contend for priority action in order to deal with a health and safety issue. As precedence may have to be given to some problems at the expense of others, it is always important to be able to explain your priorities.

Severity

You should prioritise action on health and safety issues that have a negative and significant impact on individuals – e.g. by affecting their well-being or causing illness. The same applies to areas that have not yet had a negative impact, but carry a significant risk of it. For some types of work, there are legal requirements for such risks to be identified through a risk assessment. This applies to work with hazardous substances and materials, for example.

Number affected

Other things being equal, if you can address a health and safety issue that affects a lot of employees, it will be a better investment than fixing things that only affect a small number. Solutions that help many people should therefore be prioritised.

It is also worth noting that when many people are experiencing the same problem or type of problem, this helps to legitimise the issue – ‘there must be something in it’. Examples include issues related to the indoor climate, which are typically experienced by many people, but often cannot be identified objectively, e.g. by measurements.

Ability to do something about the issue

If you have the chance to fix a health and safety issue, you should do so. However, there may be situations where the solution is out of your hands – or where the solutions that you are able to describe and implement in your action plan will not lead to a satisfactory result. Your options may be limited by your financial resources – or the problem may be due to factors outside the control of your department or unit.

Examples include employees’ feelings of job insecurity due to their form of employment or the university’s general financial situation. The ability to do something about a health and safety problem is a major consideration when it comes to prioritising – and the point is simply that you should not expend all your energy on problems that you are not able to fix properly.

When you have set your priorities, you are ready to make your action plans.

A good action plan is realistic and concrete

Action plans must be 'spot on' – otherwise you risk wasting everyone's time for nothing.

It is important to find solutions that you can actually put into practice and that clearly address the problems you want to solve. Otherwise, you could easily raise expectations that you cannot fulfil. So it is actually better to admit that you are shelving a problem – even if it means that some of your colleagues and employees have to live with their working environment issue for a bit longer.

Do not use vague and ambiguous wording in your action plans: phrases like 'we will be focusing more on this topic going forward' – or 'we must remember to help each other'. Instead, describe exactly what you propose to do.

When it comes to issues that you cannot address yourself, use the action plan to describe your intentions. For example, you must report faults and deficiencies in the building to the Campus Service, e.g. via AAU Building Support. Describe this in the action plan and then agree with the Campus Service when and how your problems should be resolved. The same applies if you pass the issue over to an external consultant and ask them to make a plan or define a process on your behalf.

Remember to be realistic with regard to time and resources. It benefits no one if you bite off more than you can chew, e.g. by making so many plans that you do not have the time or money to bring them to fruition. The success of an action plan depends on actual improvements in the working environment – not on good intentions.

A document that everyone should be able to find

Section 15a. [...] The workplace assessment shall remain at the enterprise and be available to the management and employees at the enterprise, as well as the Working Environment Authority, which inspects the workplace assessment [...]

(From the Danish Working Environment Act).

Your action plans are the key documentation of your work on the workplace assessment. The action plans must therefore be accessible to all – on a website, for example. Remember that the Danish Working Environment Authority will often check that you have carried out a workplace assessment. If you cannot produce your action plan, it will be the same as if you had not made one



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The importance of communication

You were very visible to your colleagues and employees in the discussions during the mapping process. This will typically have raised the expectation that you will be equally visible when it comes to the action plans



Action plan work takes time, and as there is often a limited group of people involved in making the plans, your colleagues and employees can easily get the feeling that nothing is happening – especially if they do not receive regular updates on what is actually being done.

So it is important that you consider how to keep people informed of progress on the action plan work. This could be handled in several ways. It is a good idea to make a particular effort with the communication, as an unusual approach can help to maintain your colleagues' awareness of the workplace assessment process and its importance. Good communication also helps to raise the profile of your health and safety organisation.

Use the communication method that suits you best. Regard communication as part of the action plan work.

Follow up is a 'must'

It is important that you consider how to ensure that your actions have had the desired effect. The main tips are:

Use the same method for the follow-up that you used for the mapping process.

For example, if you identified the problem by asking your employees, ask them again when the solution is in place: do they feel the problem has now been resolved?

On the other hand, if you found the problem by taking measurements, follow up by taking a new measurement.