University of Plymouth

Risk Assessment Form (RA1)

All staff undertaking risk assessments or checking risk assessments for student projects must be competent and have undertaken the University's Risk Assessment training.

Assessment Ref. No.	Link VR Labs	**Activity Assessed**	Immersive Virtual Reality
Assessment Date	26/02/2026	**Faculty / Directorate**	Health
Date of Next Review	Feb 2027	**Faculty / Directorate**	Health and Human Science
Assessor	Shaun Dordoy, Spencer Talbot	**School / Service**	Psychology
Version No.	1	**Additional individuals involved in developing the RA**	Martyn Atkins
Signature of Assessor	SDordoy	**Signature of Academic Supervisor / Approver**	M.AHins

Risk Score Matrix

Likelihood \ Severity	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Fatal
Very Unlikely	1 Green	2 Green	3 Green	4 Green	5 Amber
Unlikely	2 Green	4 Green	6 Amber	8 Amber	10 Red
Possible	3 Green	6 Amber	9 Amber	12 Red	15 Red
Likely	4 Green	8 Amber	12 Red	16 Red	20 Red
Almost Certain	5 Amber	10 Red	15 Red	20 Red	25 Red

Risk Score and Description

Risk Score	Risk Level	Category	Description
1 – 4	Low	Acceptable	No further actions needed
5 – 9	Medium	Tolerable/Adequate	Should be reviewed to ensure that there is nothing else which could be done
10 – 15	High	Undesirable	Immediately review current control measures, and where appropriate decide on further actions
16 - 25	Very High	Unacceptable	Stop activity and make immediate improvements

Likelihood (L) x Severity (S) = Risk Score (RS)

What is/are the hazard(s) involved with the activity being undertaken?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risk?	Risk Score with current controls in place			What further action is necessary? (Add these actions to the action plan below).	Target Risk Score Likelihood x Severity = Risk Score		
			L	S	RS		L	S	RS
Slips and trips	Researcher and participants Minor injuries may occur when falling over lab equipment.	Work areas will be kept tidy and clear of obstructions. Cables and equipment will be kept tidy and away from users when necessary. All areas will remain well lit.	1 - Very Unlikely	2 - Minor	2 - Low Risk		1 - Very Unlikely	2 - Minor	2 - Low Risk

Electrical failure	Researcher and participants Electrical shock burns or any injury as a cause of fault electrics including portable electrical equipment.	All electrical items have been PAT tested. Plugs, cables, wires and leads are regularly visibly inspected and kept in a safe and appropriate condition. Extension cables are not used as to reduce the risks of trip hazards. Electrical equipment will only be used with dry hands.	1 - Very Unlikely	5 - Fatal	5 - Medium Risk		1 - Very Unlikely	5 - Fatal	5 - Medium Risk
Display Screen Equipment	Researcher and participants Postural problems, eye strain and headaches.	Where possible, workstations will be set up as to reduce eye strain and promote a good posture. Work that involves extended amount of time will involve regular breaks or changes in activity. Lighting and temperature will be appropriately controlled. Participants will be told to withdraw from the study if they experience any of the afore mentioned symptoms while using the VR equipment.	1 - Very Unlikely	3 - Moderate	3 - Low Risk		1 - Very Unlikely	3 - Moderate	3 - Low Risk
Fire	Researcher and participants Smoke inhalation and burns	Equipment will be shut off when not in use. Participants will be informed of the buildings' fire escapes and further regulations. Any equipment using Li-ion batteries e.g. VR headsets etc. will not be left charging unattended.	1 - Very Unlikely	5 - Fatal	5 - Medium Risk	The existence of appropriate signage will be continuously verified.	1 - Very Unlikely	5 - Fatal	5 - Medium Risk
Use of VR equipment	Participants Use of the VR gear may incur shoulder or	Participants will be promoted to keep a good posture when using	1 - Very Unlikely	2 - Minor	2 - Low Risk		1 - Very Unlikely	2 - Minor	2 - Low Risk

	back pain caused by the weight of the equipment.	the equipment maintaining an appropriate centre of gravity. Participants will be encouraged to either withdraw or take a break if they experience such symptoms							
Lone/Out of hours working	Researcher and participants	Data collection will not be conducted outside of regular working hours, without the appropriate permissions. Qualified professionals and first aiders will be onsite when any data collection takes place.	1 - Very Unlikely	5 - Fatal	5 - Medium Risk		1 - Very Unlikely	5 - Fatal	5 - Medium Risk
Hygiene / cross-contamination	Participants and researcher Possible cross contamination of infections.	The detachable front and back cushions will be removed and cleaned with antibacterial wipes between each participant.	2 – Unlikely	2 – Minor	4 - Low Risk		2 – Unlikely	2 – Minor	4 - Low Risk
VR sickness	Participants	Participants will be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the equipment and will be asked if they have experienced any VR sickness in the past. The researcher will emphasise that the participant should stop their participation if they feel uneasy or unwell.	1 – Very Unlikely	2 - Minor	2 - Low Risk		1 – Very Unlikely	2 - Insignificant	2 - Low Risk
Physical dissociation	Participants Disorientation may occur after extensive use of the VR equipment.	Participants will be so informed and promoted to bring their own water to the session. Participants will be asked to sit down before leaving if they are experiencing discomfort.	1 – Very Unlikely	2 – Minor	2 - Low Risk		1 – Very Unlikely	2 - Insignificant	2 - Low Risk
Collision with objects or people	Participants	A virtual boundary will alert participants as they approach real world objects. The	2 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	6 - Medium Risk		2 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	6 - Medium Risk

		effectiveness of this boundary will be checked at the start of each experimental session. This will also be shown to participants at the beginning of each experiment.							
The virtual boundary may not be defined correctly.	Participants	The Virtual boundary will be checked at the start of each experimental session.	2 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	6 - Medium Risk		2 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	6 - Medium Risk
Participants may not notice the virtual boundary warning of collisions, if they move backwards or sideways while in the Virtual environment	Participants	Participants will be shown the boundaries of the virtual space prior to participating and told not to walk backwards around the space.	1 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	3 - Low Risk		1 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	3 - Low Risk
Task related distress	Participants VR tasks may cause unintended distress to participants (i.e., Acrophobia or claustrophobic).	All tasks will be explained clearly and in detail prior to participants taking part. Participants will be told that they can withdraw at any time.	1 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	3 - Low Risk		1 – Unlikely	3 - Moderate	3 - Low Risk
Height related discomfort	Participants Some interactions are designed for the average person – For example clicking on something positioned at waist height. If a participant is taller than average, repeatedly bending over to interact with potential targets may cause minor discomfort.	All participants will be told they may withdraw from the task at any time without penalty.	1 – Unlikely	1 - Insignificant	1 - Low Risk		1 – Unlikely	1 - Insignificant	1 - Low Risk

Component collision	Participants Fast of unexpected movement of a body part may result in unintentional collision with real world objects.	Tasks will be designed so fast, uncontrolled movements are not required for task completion.	1 – Unlikely	2 – Minor	2- Low Risk		1 – Unlikely	2 – Minor	2- Low Risk
Fire alarm while participant is in the VR space	Participants	The VR task will be immediately ended and both he experimenter and participant will be required to immediately leave the building and assemble at the designated area.	3 - Possible	2 - Minor	6 - Medium Risk		3 - Possible	2 - Minor	6 - Medium Risk

Refer to scoring matrix on page ¾

Action Plan and Monitoring

This section should be completed by the Risk Assessor and discussed with Manager / Academic Supervisor		This section should be completed by the Manager / Academic Supervisor for monitor and review		
Hazard	**Action required**	**Action assigned to**	**Target date**	**Date Completed**
Fire	Any equipment using Li-ion batteries e.g. VR headsets etc. should not be left charging unattended. Send reminder to researchers and staff.	Martyn Atkins	Feb 2026	Feb 2026

Review

When reviewing this risk assessment remember to move completed actions into the 'what are you already doing.' column, as these actions should be in place by the time you review the risk assessment. You should review your risk assessment if you think it might no longer be valid (e.g. following an incident in the workplace or if there are any significant changes to hazards, such as new work equipment, work activities, personnel etc.)

Severity Table

Severity of injury	Examples	Score
Insignificant	None or very insignificant injuries, health effects, damage or disruption to work. Short-term and/or localised environmental harm.	1
Minor	Cuts bruises, mild skin irritations, mild headaches and pains requiring minor first aid treatment. Minor property damage or disruption to work. Notable contributor to environmental harm.	2

Likelihood Table

Severity of injury	Examples	Score
Very unlikely	Good control measures are in place. Controls do not rely on a person using them (i.e. personal compliance with safety rules). Controls are very unlikely to break down. People are very rarely in this area or very rarely engage in this activity.	1
Unlikely	Reasonable control measures are in place but they do rely on a person using them (some room for human error). Controls unlikely to breakdown. People are not often in this area / do not often engage in this activity.	2

Moderate	More serious injuries or ill-health requiring time off work or a hospital visit for example burns sprains, strains, short term musculoskeletal disorders, cut requiring stitches, back injuries, fractures to fingers and toes. Short term absence relating to physical or mental health issues. More serious property damage or disruption. A significant contributor to environmental harm.	3
Major	Broken limbs, amputations, long-term health problems or longer absence. Acute illness requiring medical treatment. Loss of consciousness, serious electric shock, loss of sight. Major property damage, major disruption to work. A major contributor to significant environmental harm.	4
Fatal	Injury or ill-health which leads to death either at the time, soon after the incident, or eventually, as in the case of certain occupational diseases, such as asbestos-related cancers. Catastrophic business losses. The major contributor to significant environmental harm.	5

Possible	Inadequate controls are in place, or likely to breakdown if not maintained. Controls rely on personal compliance. People are sometimes in this area or sometimes engage in this activity and situations sometimes arise from this activity.	3
Likely	Poor controls in place. Heavy reliance on personal compliance (lots of room for human error). People are often in this area / engage in this activity on a regular basis / situation often arise from this activity.	4
Almost certain	No controls in place where there should be, exposure to the hazard is expected to occur in most circumstances. The activity is considered such high risk that it will `certainly lead to injuries.	5