

ASSESSMENT OF HEARING ACUITY (H)

1. Personnel working in noisy working environments are at risk of hearing damage, which may result in deafness and/or tinnitus. Audiometry is the standard health surveillance tool for the assessment of noise-induced hearing loss and all new entrants must have their hearing acuity assessed by pure tone audiometry. This requirement will provide a baseline against which future audiometry can be compared and will also highlight any disorder of hearing at recruitment. The standards of hearing acuity required by individual trade groups are a single Service issue and the relevant single Service publications contain detailed information on these standards. For detailed information on health surveillance once in service see the Surgeon General's Policy Letter 12/06³⁰.

2. **Audiometric basis of assessment.** The basis of audiometric assessment is the summing of high and low frequency levels in decibels (dB) over six frequencies. The frequencies used are 0.5, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 kilohertz (kHz); the low frequencies being 0.5, 1 and 2 kHz and the high frequencies 3, 4 and 6 kHz. The hearing in each ear is assessed and recorded separately. The assessment is recorded under the first H for the right ear, and under the second H for the left ear. The higher value digit, representing the worst frequency group, determines the individual's overall hearing category for each ear.

3. **Audiometric standards.** There are five grades of hearing acuity: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8, described in the following table:

Grade	Sum of hearing level at low frequencies in dB	Sum of hearing level at high frequencies in dB	General description
1	Not more than 45. (RN only: No single level to be more than 20dB)	Not more than 45. (RN only: Level not to be more than 30 dB at 6 kHz or 20 dB at any other frequency)	Good hearing
2	Not more than 84	Not more than 123	Acceptable hearing
3	Not more than 150	Not more than 210	Impaired hearing.
4	More than 150	More than 210	Poor hearing where continuing employment is subject to specialist assessment.
8	More than 150	More than 210	Poor hearing that has been assessed as being incompatible with continued service.

Table D1: Grades of hearing acuity.

4. During service any change in the H degree, other than a fall from H1 to H2, must be referred for an ENT opinion. Unilateral hearing loss also required specialist assessment, with investigation as necessary. Those with unilateral or bilateral hearing loss who are considered suitable for continued employment in the Services must be subject to appropriate controls and education (both of the individual and their managers) to ensure appropriate protection from exposure to noise and to reduce the risk of any further deterioration in hearing.

5. It is important to remember that hearing acuity does not necessarily correlate closely with hearing function or ability to undertake effectively and safely any particular employment

³⁰ SGPL 12/06: Noise at work health surveillance.

role. Any functional impairment that is found to be due to impaired hearing should be reflected in the P quality. Restrictions on employment that are as a direct result of impaired hearing should also be reflected in the P quality. In both these cases the impaired hearing acuity will be reflected in the H quality for each ear.