

University of Reading Health and Safety Strategic Action Plan 2025-2028

Enabling Excellence Through Safe, Proportionate &
Informed Decision-Making

Introduction

- This strategic plan is not a legal document. It describes how we create a culture that prevents harm, protects people, and manages risk across all foreseeable hazards.
- The University operates an integrated health and safety prevention and harm protection system, delivered through distinct professional accountabilities, each governed by their own statutory frameworks.
- Fire safety is a specialist discipline within our prevention system, requiring specific competence, but sharing the same cultural foundations as health and safety.

Why We Need to Evolve

Current perception:

- Reactive, compliance-focused
- Engaged after issues arise

Future ambition:

- Proactive, insight-driven (Design out the risk)
- Embedded in decision-making from the outset
- Improved psychological safety
- Seen as trusted business partner

Opportunity:

- Improve health and safety culture across the organisation
- Improved productivity and performance
- Stronger legal and regulatory compliance
- Enhanced reputation & trust through achieving shared objectives
- Reduce risk of injuries and ill-health (improved absenteeism / presenteeism)
- Improved staff competence, confidence and morale and lower staff turnover



Vision & Mission – Our Strategic Direction



Vision: Embed consistent leadership behaviours for health, safety and fire risk into every decision, enabling our community to thrive, innovate and excel safely.



Mission: Act as trusted partners who anticipate risk, enable opportunity, and support excellence.

What Success Looks Like



Professional insight from H&SS is sought earlier in decision processes



Seen as a **trusted strategic partner**, not a gatekeeper



Staff and students feel **safe, healthy, supported, and heard**



Risk is **understood, managed, and enabling**



Strong alignment with **University strategic priorities**



H&S Culture at the University reflects a high performing organisation and competitive advantage.

Measuring Success



Metrics

Early engagement in relevant projects increases

Staff perception of safety culture improves

Health, safety and fire insights understood as adding value not following rules because we must (the law sets the floor not the ceiling!)

Quality of risk in decision-making

Sufficient time is allowed to enable safe decisions

H&S Culture

The Missing Mindset: From Obligation to Opportunity

High performing organisations understand that a mature health, safety and risk management culture isn't about avoiding negative outcomes and their cost; It's a driver of positive value.

- Reduce operational downtime
- Improve consistency and process discipline
- Enhance employee trust and engagement
- Strengthen brand reputation
- Lower insurance premiums
- Support long-term business resilience

That's not cost – it's return on investment

Aligning to University Strategy

Supporting Our Community → Safe, Inclusive, Empowered

Focus

- Psychological and physical safety
- Building a safe culture where staff feel confident to speak up, act early and learn continuously, and to report issues without fear or blame
- Safety supports belonging and performance

Key Actions:

- Safety climate surveys (H&S maturity matrix, H&S culture survey)
- Wellbeing & psychosocial risk management
- Strong safety culture promoted at induction and by trained and competent leaders / managers



Excellence

Corporate themes - Continuous improvement, educational excellence, research excellence, connected networks

Health and Safety is part of how excellence is delivered – not a constraint!

Focus:

- Safety as a driver of high performance
- Embedded in teaching curriculum, research planning, and project approvals & delivery

Key shift from approval gatekeeper to embedded Business Partner

Key Actions:

- “Safety by Design” in projects and research (including effective contractor / collaborator / partner management)
- Early engagement in decision-making
- School / Directorate-aligned H&S Business Partners & Fire safety Officers



Environmental Sustainability

Safe & sustainable by design

Corporate themes - Leadership, Stewardship, Research, Education

Strong overlap between sustainability, risk and long-term harm prevention

Strategic commitments:

Align H&S with Environmental, Social and Governance agenda

Integrate safety into sustainability projects

Key initiatives:

Joint governance with sustainability teams

Safe implementation of green technologies/labs

Risk-informed climate adaptation planning

Emergency preparedness to reduce environmental impact



Civic Engagement Trusted, Responsible Institution

Corporate themes: Civic responsibility, Partnerships, Reputation

H&S underpins public trust, partnerships and community engagement.

Strategic commitments:

- Position H&S as part of institutional reputation
- Ensure safe delivery of outreach, partnerships, research and events

Key initiatives:

- Partner risk frameworks
- Community-facing safety standards
- Crisis preparedness and resilience
- Improved internal and external communication
- Emergency preparedness to reduce reputational harm



Financial Sustainability

Value through risk intelligence

Corporate themes – Efficiency, Resilience, Transparency

Good health and safety = reduced cost, better decisions, improved productivity and resilience

Strategic commitments:

- Demonstrate value, not just compliance
- Support risk-based optimisation

Key initiatives:

- Cost-of-risk reporting
- Insurance and risk optimisation through prevention of serious incidents
- Smarter assurance (less bureaucracy, more insight)



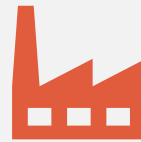
H&S Shifts

Old Model	New Model
Reactive	Proactive
Policing	Partnering
Compliance-led	Risk & insight-led
Centralised	Embedded
Technical specialists only	Hybrid: advisors + influencers

New team Structure (Hybrid model)



School / Directorate H&S Business Partners (Embedded, relationship-driven)



Specialist Risk Advisors (Deep expertise e.g. scientific safety, fire safety, construction / estates, asbestos, events, international travel)



Insight and Improvement functions (Audit, proactive monitoring, data / trends, training development)



Implementation Plan

3-year Roadmap

Year 1: Foundations



Credibility & Visibility

Map stakeholders and relationships

Define and communicate new vision & SLA

Pilot H&S Business Partner model (review after 1st year)



Introduce:

Early engagement in projects
Safety in governance processes

Develop **leading indicators** (not just incidents)

Hazard profiling for Schools / Directorates

Wider sharing of lessons learned



Quick wins –

Join key decision-making forums

Simplify processes – H&S policies and procedures

Improved communications through updates & story telling

Year 2: Embedding

H&S integrated into project lifecycle of all assets, research governance, curriculum design where appropriate (e.g. lab / workshop safety)

Revise business partnering model (where required)

Launch cultural change programmes e.g. “Safety = excellence” campaign, improved visibility of H&S work at events, positive messaging,

Use audit and maturity matrix data to influence decisions

Undertake risk profile and community requirements for access to H&S data / systems. **Build business plan for new integrated systems.**

Improving and increasing internal and external strategic partnerships

**Year 3:
Maturity
(Influence &
leadership)**

H&SS seen as:

Strategic advisor & enabler

Value creator

Supporting excellence

Delivering safely

What we need – Enablers for Success



- Senior leadership demonstrate visible ownership of life safety risks
- School & Directorate engagement
- Investment in capability (technology that benefits our community & staff training)
- Commitment to change
- Early engagement to embed H&S
- Support for mandatory H&S induction for all staff / role specific training, H&S in key role PDR's and promotion boards

Key message: Health & Safety is not just about legal compliance & preventing harm – it is fundamental to enabling people, improved performance and excellence at the University of Reading.