

Safety Note 79 1st Edition, January 2021

LOCAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

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| Summary | | | |
| This Safety Note briefly summarises the local health and safety committee arrangements which should be established in Schools, Functions or buildings. | | | |
| Scope | | | |
| To provide guidance on establishing and managing local health and safety committees including committee member responsibilities, terms of reference and example standing agenda items. | | | |
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Introduction and Scope

This Safety Note briefly summarises the local health and safety committee arrangements which should be established in your School, Function or Building.

Definitions

H&S Committees – Local Health and Safety committees

UHSWC- University Health Safety and Wellbeing committee

Roles and Responsibilities

It is expected that all Schools with laboratory and/or field-based teaching/research will have their own health and safety (H&S) committee. Other Schools and Functions are expected to either have their own or be covered by a joint committee, perhaps relating to the building they share. Such committees should meet at least once a term. Below is a generic terms of reference, membership and agenda, along with a comment about the requirements for the committee chair.

Wellbeing should be covered either within the H&S committee or by means of separate arrangements.

The Committee should have a combination of skills, experience and knowledge of work activities to ensure that the Committee is competent to cover its terms of reference, and to represent the views of all University staff who are directly engaged in work activities.

For Schools this may include representatives from: • Technical Services • Academic staff • Heads of Departments/Units • Research staff • Postgraduate research students • Executive Support staff • Estates • School H&S Coordinator(s) • Member of H&S Services (Liaison Advisor)

UHSWC

The UHSWC will periodically seek confirmation of committee formations and activities. From 2020 onwards, before every meeting the UHSWC invites input from local committees on issues which cannot be resolved locally and after every meeting it makes available a summary of its deliberations.

Committee Chair

The Head of School/Director of the Function should chair the HS&W Committee unless there is a good reason for it to be someone else, in which case it should be a senior manager within the School/Function. The Chair should not be a Health & Safety Co-ordinator.

The Chair has a vital strategic function - they must provide leadership and direction. They should enable committee discussion, ensuring that as far as possible all members have an opportunity to contribute. They should communicate with the Chairs of other local h&s Committees as necessary, remain aware of direction from the University HS&W Committee and escalate issues when they cannot be resolved by the local h&s committee. Training, advice and support (such as opportunities to network with other Chairs of local HS&W committees) are available from HSS via the Liaison Advisor.

Committee secretary

A person competent in administration and minute-taking should act as Secretary for the Committee. When drawing up the agenda with the Chair, they should note guidance from HSS and the UHSWC on recommended topics. They are encouraged to seek advice, if required, on inviting additional participants to speak on specific agenda topics (for example the Deputy Fire Safety Advisor advises on findings from fire drills).

Liaison advisor

Health & Safety Services provides a professional H&S Advisor as “Liaison Advisor” to attend each local HS&W committee. They provide liaison and support from HSS to local HSCs and committee chairs and secretaries.

Example Terms of Reference for a School/Function/Building HS&W Committee

To make recommendations to the School/Function Management Group on School policies, learning needs, local rules and procedures, emergency/incident response arrangements, and improvement plans - then monitor actions arising, and review their completion and effectiveness

To review and assess the implications of University Policies and Safety Codes of Practice and agree necessary changes to local procedures

To review the implications and management of significant new or different risks arising from School/Function activities and relevant construction or refurbishment work

To identify and resolve uncertainty over what local HS&W committee covers which physical locations, equipment, staff and work activities

To consider investigation reports for incidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses, and the effectiveness of action to prevent similar incidents in the future

To consider diversity & equality aspects of HS&W within the School/Function, in particular issues of life-safety pertaining to disabled people and evacuation or first aid

To consider recommendations from audits and inspections of the School/Function, relevant fire drills or emergency exercises, and agree remedial actions and monitor completion

To consider relevant health, safety and wellbeing matters raised by: members of the Committee and the School/Function community, Chairs of other local HS&W committees, the University Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee, and local safety representatives of recognised trade unions

To identify issues which cannot be resolved through local School/Function action and propose remedies to the relevant Chair of other local HS&W committees or escalate to the University HS&W Committee, and in turn consider issues raised by them

Where the Committee covers a building, rather than one School or Function:

To undertake the above for all Schools/Functions using the building and ensure co-ordination of H&S matters relevant to work activities within the building

EXAMPLE HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Time/Date/Venue

AGENDA [not all items will be required at every meeting]

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
3. Actions arising (not covered elsewhere)
4. H&S management

Risk Assessment completion

Review of processes for risk assessment of work activities - including fieldwork, travel, research, teaching [as applicable]

New policies, procedures for comment/approval

Findings from inspection/audit reports

Management of hazardous waste, equipment and legacy items

Action/improvement plans [3 Top H&S Improvement Priorities declaration due Mar/Apr each year]

Communication from/to UHSWC

H&S Learning needs of senior staff, new starters, PG students, other staff and students

5. Emergency Arrangements

Fire Safety

actions outstanding from fire risk assessments

evacuation - drills, recruitment and training of Fire Wardens, Evac Officers

disabled people's safety needs [for example Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans, Deaf Alerter system, obstruction of refuges, evac chairs, etc]

First aid – including: completion of First Aid Needs Assessment; siting, inspection and replenishment of FA kits and defibs; recruitment and training of Appointed Persons & First Aiders;

Other emergency arrangements [for example, spillage response procedures and spill exercises]

6. Building and equipment issues [especially planned refurbishment, statutory examination and test of lifting and pressure equipment, management of specialist equipment not maintained by Estates]

7. Specialist hazards e.g. Radiation/Biological/Chemical safety or significant new hazards, facilities or ways of working

8. Summary of incident investigation findings

9. Reports from Student and Staff Reps

10. Report from Health & Safety Services

11. Any other business

12. Date of next meeting