HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY
## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
### HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

## 2012

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FOREWORD BY THE PRINCIPAL

The University is committed to excellence in all its activities. This includes ensuring the safety and the health of our staff, our students and visitors to the University. Our Health and Safety Policy outlines how we set about achieving this and it gives particular attention to the critical role of line managers in making sure that all of the activities under their control are carried out safely.

I am committed to the Policy and have overall responsibility for its implementation. However each one of us has an important role to play in ensuring and maintaining good standards of health and safety in the places where we work and in making sure that health and safety are central to everything we do.

Professor Ian Diamond
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
June 2012
A) HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the University of Aberdeen to take all reasonable and practicable steps to safeguard the health and safety of all employees and students while at work and to protect other persons from hazards to health and safety arising out of the University’s activities.

The following principles are fundamental to the management of health and safety in the University:

1. The maintenance and continuing development of health and safety management systems are priorities for the University. Not only do we wish to reduce the risks of injuries and ill health but we also recognise that the effective management of health and safety can make a significant contribution to the performance of the University by helping minimise losses and liabilities.

2. Health and safety matters are line management responsibilities. Accordingly individual members of the University staff are required to take responsibility for health and safety in all activities under their control.

3. The requirements of health and safety legislation set the minimum standards of health and safety performance which the University requires.

4. The development throughout the University of a culture supportive of health and safety is essential for the achievement of adequate control over risks.

5. Students, on leaving the University, should have an attitude of mind which expects good health and safety practice to be normal procedure. This will only occur if University staff set high standards by personal example and by ensuring that safe practice is routine.

6. Individual Heads of School and Heads of Support Services must make arrangements for the implementation of this Policy which are appropriate to the size and structure of their School/Service and the nature of its activities.

To ensure the Policy is kept up to date it will be reviewed at least once each year and more frequently if circumstances demand.
ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

1) **University Court**
   
The University Court has overall responsibility for setting and periodically reviewing the University's Health and Safety Policy and for ensuring its effective implementation in Schools and Support Services.

2) **Operating Board**
   
The Operating Board has delegated authority from the University Court to set and periodically review the University's Health and Safety Policy and to take necessary steps to ensure its effective implementation in Schools and Support Services. The University’s Health and Safety Committee is a committee of the Operating Board.

3) **Senior management of the University**
   
   (a) The Principal has overall responsibility for implementation of the University Health and Safety Policy.

   (b) Vice Principals/Secretary/Heads of College are responsible for implementation of the Policy in their areas of control and, in particular,
      • for ensuring that individual Heads of School/Support Service under their line management take necessary action to satisfy the requirements of the Policy and
      • for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to Heads of School/Support Service to enable them to meet their health and safety responsibilities.

   (c) The Vice Principal who convenes the University Health and Safety Committee is also the member of the University’s management charged with overseeing the University’s arrangements for the management of health and safety.

4) **University Health and Safety Committee**
   
The remit of the University Health and Safety Committee is

   (a) To advise the Operating Board on matters relating to general health and safety policy;

   (b) To recommend to the Operating Board actions necessary to implement University health and safety policies;

   (c) To monitor the extent of compliance with University health and safety policies and to recommend to the Operating Board actions necessary to address areas of non-compliance;

   (d) To maintain standing sub-committees to consider health and safety matters relating to use of ionising and non-ionising radiations and work with genetically modified organisms;

   (e) To provide a forum for consultation and discussion of health and safety matters;

   (f) To promote a culture of consciousness of health and safety and of continuing improvement in those areas;

   (g) To report at least three times each year to the Operating Board.

Composition: The membership of the University Health and Safety Committee includes

- Operating Board appointees
- Nominees from each of the Colleges
- Representatives from trade unions with negotiating rights
- Representatives from student bodies

5) **Central Health and Safety Functions**

The University Safety Adviser, the Occupational Health Service and the Radiation Protection Service
- Provide specialist advice to the Operating Board (through the University Health and Safety Committee)
- Advise and assist individual Schools/Support Services with the development, implementation and maintenance of their own health and safety arrangements.

Note: The Radiation Protection Adviser within the Radiation Protection Service also acts as an adviser to the Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee as well as having an independent statutory function.

6) **Heads Of School/Support Service**

The key to effective health and safety management in the University is the management action taken by individual Schools and Support Services. Nearly all of the activities of the University which give rise to significant risk take place under the control of University Schools and Support Services.

Each Head of School/Support Service is responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining an effective health and safety management system which is appropriate for the School/Support Service. It must satisfy the broad requirements of the University Health and Safety Policy and, in particular, it must contain the core elements described in Section C of the Policy.

The health and safety arrangements applicable to a particular activity in the University will be driven by both:
- a) The University Health and Safety Policy (this document) and
- b) The Health and Safety Policy of the School/Support Service controlling the activity.

7) **Health and safety concerns**

It is expected that most health and safety problems will be resolved by discussions within the School/Support Service concerned. An individual member of staff with a concern about a health and safety matter should discuss it initially with his/her line manager or with the local Safety Adviser. If the matter is not resolved in this way, it should be brought to the attention of the Head of School/Support Service.
C) HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS/SUPPORT SERVICES

Each School/Support Service must manage health and safety in a way appropriate to

- Its size and structure
- The nature of its activities
- The level of risk associated with those activities.

Whatever methods are adopted, the following core elements must be incorporated into each School/Support Service’s health and safety management system.

1) **Policy**
   (a) Each School/Support Service must produce its own Health and Safety Policy to supplement the University’s Policy.
   (b) The Policy must be signed and dated by the Head of School/Support Service.
   (c) The Policy must be reviewed annually and records of the review retained.
   (d) The Policy must be communicated to all staff and students in the School/Support Service.

2) **Organisation**
   (a) Each Head of School/Support Service must ensure that responsibilities for health and safety are devolved successively through the organisational structure.
   (b) The objective is to ensure that each activity involving significant risk is the clear responsibility of a member of the School/Support Service.

3) **Local Safety Adviser**
   (a) Each Head of School/Support Service must appoint one or more members of staff as the Safety Adviser(s) for the School/Support Service and notify the University Safety Adviser of the appointment(s).
   (b) The main task of the Safety Adviser is to advise the Head of School/Support Service on health and safety matters and to liaise with the University Health and Safety Advisers on matters affecting the School/Support Service.
   (c) Any other responsibilities must be formally delegated to the Safety Adviser by the Head of School/Support Service.

4) **Health and Safety Committee**
   (a) Each Head of School/Support Service must either
      (i) Set up one or more Health and Safety Committees or
      (ii) Make health and safety a standing item on the agenda of the School/Support Service’s management meetings.
      (It is expected that in Schools with laboratories one or more Health and Safety Committees will be formed.)
   (b) The Convener of the Health and Safety Committee should be either the Head of School/Support Service or another senior member of staff.
   (c) The function of the Health and Safety Committee should be to
      (i) Keep under review health and safety matters in the School/Support Service and
      (ii) Make recommendations to the Head of School/Support Service on steps which should be taken to improve health and safety.
5) **Risk Assessments**

(a) Each School/Support Service must assess the risks to the health and safety of staff, students and others arising from its activities.

(b) Risk assessments must cover
   - The main ways in which staff, students and others are exposed to circumstances that could result in injury or ill health;
   - What is currently done to prevent injury and ill health;
   - Anything more that can be done.

(c) The significant findings of the risk assessments must be recorded.

6) **Plant and Equipment**

Each School/Support Service must ensure that all plant and equipment are subject to regular inspection and maintenance

(a) If risk assessments show it to be necessary, or

(b) If it is a statutory requirement.

7) **Health and Safety Awareness and Competence**

(a) Each School/Support Service must ensure that staff and students have an appropriate awareness of health and safety risks and of their own roles and responsibilities and also have the necessary competence to perform tasks which can impact on health and safety.

(b) The School/Support Service must, where necessary, provide training so that staff and students can achieve the required awareness/competence.

8) **Monitoring - Inspections**

(a) Each School/Support Service must monitor its health and safety arrangements to ensure that they are performing as intended.

(b) The main monitoring tool will be the periodic inspection of the its activities and its health and safety records.

(c) The Head of School/Support Service must assign staff to carry out the monitoring and ensure that they are competent so to do.

9) **Accidents and Near Misses**

(a) Each School/Support Service must report all accidents and significant near misses immediately to the University Safety Adviser.

(b) Accidents and near misses may indicate breakdowns in the School/Support Service’s health and safety arrangements. The School/Support Service must therefore investigate accidents or near misses, identify the causes and initiate any necessary corrective actions.
10) **Emergencies**
(a) Each School/Support Service must ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place to respond to a fire in premises which it occupies.
(b) Each School/Support Service must ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place to respond to any other major incident arising from its activities.
(c) Each School/Support Service must ensure that there are adequate and readily available first aid facilities for its staff and students.

11) **Review and Reporting**
(a) Each School/Support Service must at least annually review progress towards meeting its health and safety objectives.
(b) Each School/Support Service must report annually on its health and safety performance to the University Health and Safety Committee in a format prescribed by the Committee.

12) **Sharing of facilities**
A School/Support Service may carry out some of its activities jointly with other Schools/Support Services or with organisations outside of the University and some Schools/Support Services may share University facilities. In such situations:
(a) The Schools/Support Services concerned must take steps to ensure cooperation on matters of health and safety with the other Schools/Support Services or organisations and
(b) The Schools/Support Services concerned must co-ordinate their health and safety arrangements to the extent necessary for the effective management of health and safety.
D) TRAINING AND SUPERVISION OF UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

1) Undergraduate Students
(a) Initially undergraduate students should be assumed to be untrained in all matters of health and safety.
(b) Each School should provide undergraduates with the training and supervision necessary to ensure their health and safety
   • While working in University premises
   • On University organised fieldwork
   • During University work elsewhere.
(c) Hazardous substances and equipment should not be introduced into undergraduate practical work until the risks associated with their use have been assessed and adequate safeguards provided.
(d) Written instructions to undergraduates about practical work must always draw attention to
   • The hazards of substances and equipment and
   • The safeguards that are provided.
   Undergraduates should also be provided with appropriate training before practical work begins.
(e) Any independent work (e.g. as part of an “honours project”) should be subject to at least the standards of supervision applied to postgraduate work (see below).

2) Postgraduate Students
(a) Each School must make arrangements to provide postgraduate students with such supervision as is necessary to ensure their health and safety.
(b) The duty to supervise postgraduate students is delegated by the University to the Head of School and thence to the member of staff directly responsible for the student.
(c) New postgraduate students should be trained in School health and safety policies and procedures.
(d) Supervisors must not discharge their duty to supervise by relying solely upon a postgraduate student’s status or apparent competence. They must be able to demonstrate that they have exercised an active supervisory role.
(e) Active supervision does not usually mean constant attendance. Supervisors must ensure
   • Postgraduate projects are assessed for health and safety risks;
   • Necessary precautions are agreed with the student (and in all but the most elementary circumstances are committed to writing);
   • Regular checks are carried out to ensure that the student is working to the agreed procedures;
   • Postgraduate students understand that significant alterations in agreed procedures must not be introduced without the supervisor’s knowledge.
(f) Each School must make formal arrangements to cover for the temporary absence of a postgraduate student’s normal supervisor.
E) **SPECIAL HAZARDS**

1) **Radiation**
   (a) Schools which intend to perform work involving ionising radiation or lasers must first obtain the approval of the Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee.
   (b) Any approval given may be revoked at any time.

2) **Genetic Modification**
   (a) Schools which intend to perform work with genetically modified organisms must first obtain the approval of the appropriate Genetic Modification Safety Sub-Committee.
   (b) Any approval given may be revoked at any time.
   (c) The approval of the Genetic Modification Safety Sub-Committee must be obtained before application is made to the Health and Safety Executive for formal statutory approval.

F) **FIRE SAFETY**

(a) The carrying out of fire risk assessments is fundamental to the achievement of satisfactory standards of fire safety. Fire risk assessments will consider both the University’s buildings (including fixtures and fittings) and the use to which those buildings are put by Schools/Support Services.

(b) The University’s organisational arrangements for health and safety, as set out in this Policy, will also apply to fire safety matters. The University Safety Adviser will ensure that fire risk assessments are carried out and kept under review.

(c) The Director of Estates will assume responsibility for fire safety matters as regards the fabric, fixtures and fittings of University buildings and installed fire safety equipment.

(d) In respect of matters which come under their control, Heads of School/Support Service must
   - Implement improvements identified as a result of the risk assessments;
   - Agree with other Schools/Support Services, in the buildings which they occupy, who will be responsible for supervising and implementing emergency evacuation arrangements for the buildings and providing necessary information to the emergency services responding to an incident;
   - Ensure that means of escape are kept in a condition such that they can be used safely at all times;
   - Provide appropriate fire safety training for their members of staff and students.
G) OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

(a) The University will provide an occupational health service. All members of staff shall be entitled to consult the service for advice on health matters. Members of staff are encouraged to discuss any health problems relating to work in the first instance with their line managers, but members of staff can consult the occupational health service for medical advice and assistance at any time
  • if they are concerned that aspects of their jobs are making them ill, or
  • if they feel that they cannot perform at work to the best of their abilities because of health problems.

The service will be staffed by occupational health physicians and advisers. All consultations will be in strict medical confidence. If a member staff chooses to consult the service, then details of discussions will not be supplied to the University or to any other person without the consent of the individual concerned.

(b) The occupational health service will also provide support and guidance to University managers, through the Human Resources Section, with matters related to the health and fitness for work of their members of staff.

(c) Health surveillance will be provided by the occupational health service to both members of staff and to postgraduate students based on the outcomes of risk assessments.

(d) Medical information relating to individuals which are held by the occupational health service will be treated in strict confidence in line with medical ethics and data protection requirements.