

Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies

Health and Safety Policy

1) Introduction

Health and safety is important to the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies. We wish to prevent the Institute's activities causing harm to staff, students or members of the wider community. Not only can accidents cause pain and suffering, they can also use up resources which could be put to better use.

In this booklet you will find details of what we do in the Institute to prevent circumstances arising which could cause injury or ill health. It is important that both staff and students understand their role in these arrangements. Health and safety legislation imposes duties on both staff and students as well as on the Institute and the University as a whole. The co-operation and active involvement of everyone in the Institute is essential if we are to meet all our statutory obligations.

Our systems and procedures can always be improved. I will commission a formal review of our health and safety arrangements every 12 months. Any student or member of staff who has suggestions for making our arrangements more effective is encouraged to contact Jonathan Cameron, Michael Brown or Cairns Craig with their ideas.

Head of Department

2) Health and Safety Organisation in the Department

Cairns Craig as Director of the Institute has overall responsibility for health and safety in the Institute.

In the Institute (and throughout the University) health and safety matters are line management responsibilities. Accordingly individual members of staff are required to take responsibility for health and safety in all activities under their control. Those who manage and supervise other staff and students must ensure that the staff and students are aware of the dangers in the tasks they undertake and understand and are able to implement appropriate precautions. They must ensure that staff and students are provided with appropriate training and supervision.

(This booklet covers the main health and safety hazards present in the Institute. Those in supervisory positions must ensure that the precautions outlined are implemented in their areas of control. They must also ensure that necessary precautions are developed and implemented for any activities which create dangers not covered by this booklet.)

Departmental Safety Adviser

The Head of Department has appointed Jonathan Cameron as the Institute Safety Adviser. The main duties of the Institute Safety Adviser are to provide advice to members of the Institute on health and safety matters and to guide us all in the development and implementation of our health and safety arrangements. Anyone with a health and safety problem which they cannot resolve should not hesitate to contact Jonathan Cameron.

Department Safety Committee

To provide a forum for discussion of health and safety matters the Head of Department has set up a safety committee. The committee has the following membership:

Michael Brown
Jonathan Cameron
Cairns Craig

The remit of the committee is to

- 1) Keep under review the health and safety arrangements of the Institute and make recommendations to the Director of the Institute on steps to be taken to ensure the effectiveness of the Institute's health and safety policy.
- 2) Formally review the Institute's health and safety management system every 12 months and make recommendations for any changes to the Director of the Institute.
- 3) Provide a forum for discussion of health and safety matters raised by members of the committee or raised by staff/students through committee members.

- 4) Meet at least once each term and at other times as the convenor of the committee deems appropriate.
- 5) Produce minutes of its meetings in a timely manner and publish them on the Institute's notice boards.

Particular matters that the committee should consider include

- Reports of health and safety inspections of the Institute
- Reports of all accidents and near misses
- The adequacy of the Institutes arrangements for risk assessment
- The health and safety content of training for staff and students
- Health and safety information produced for staff and students and how it is communicated

If any student or member of staff has a matter they wish the committee to discuss they should contact one of the committee.

Responsibilities of all staff and students

Legislation places responsibilities on organisations to ensure the health and safety of their staff and others who may be affected by their activities.

However individuals also have health and safety responsibilities.

- Staff and students must co-operate and comply with the health and safety arrangements put in place by the University and by the Institute
- Staff and students must do what they can to make sure that their activities do not cause harm to others
- Anyone who sees, or becomes aware of, something which they believe is unsafe should either take immediate steps to make it safe or alternatively bring it to the attention of someone who can do something about it
- No one should interfere with, or misuse, anything which is provided for reasons of health and safety.

3) Health and Safety Information

This booklet contains some of the health and safety information which staff and students will need. It will be reviewed at least every 12 months and the booklet will be reissued if any changes are required.

Other health and safety information will be circulated to members of the Department and/or posted on the notice boards located in the main hallway outside the Institute Administrative Office.

The Institute Safety Adviser maintains a small library of health and safety information which members of the Institute can consult. The Institute Safety Adviser can also access the larger library of health and safety publications maintained by the University Safety Adviser.

4) Fire Safety

Fire is probably the greatest single safety related threat to the Institute and to members of the Department. Even if everyone were to escape safely from the building, a fire could destroy our facilities and all our documents and data. It is important therefore that we do as much as we can to prevent a fire starting. If despite our best efforts a fire should start, a fast and effective response can help save life and property.

Fire prevention

The University's no smoking policy eliminates one of the main ways in which a fire can start. Our systems for inspecting electrical equipment should reduce the chances of faulty electrical equipment being a source of fire.

Other important precautions are

- Avoid large accumulations of material which might easily burn (e.g. waste paper, cardboard, plastics)
- Do not obstruct the ventilation of electrical equipment or place material immediately above or close to electric heaters.
- Do not overload electrical sockets by connecting too many appliances to a single socket.

On discovering a fire

If you discover a fire, it is important to take the following steps in the order given:

- 1) Sound the alarm (No fire is so small that the alarm does not need to be sounded. A fire extinguisher should not be discharged onto a fire until the alarm has been sounded.)
- 2) Get someone to call the fire brigade by dialling 9-999
- 3) Warn others in the area (Shout fire and bang on doors! Some people do not always respond immediately to fire alarms)
- 4) Only if you can do so without putting your own safety at risk, attempt to fight the fire with a suitable extinguisher
- 5) Otherwise, close the door to the area where the fire is (to contain the fire) and leave the building and await the arrival of the fire brigade.
- 6) At the assembly point (shown on the fire notices), report to the person in charge. Provide them with information about what has happened.

On hearing the fire alarm

If you hear the fire alarm:

- 1) Check the rooms near to yours, if you can, to ensure the occupants have heard the alarm and have left
- 2) Leave the building by the nearest exit and go to the assembly point shown on the fire notices
- 3) Anyone teaching or supervising groups of students should ensure that all the students leave the building by the nearest exit and go to the assembly point.
- 4) If you have any information about someone who might be still in the building, report to the person in charge.

Note: Do not re-enter the building until the fire alarm has been silenced. Call Ext 3939 (24 hour Estates number) to request attendance from an electrician to silence and reset the alarm.

Extinguishers

There are four main types of extinguisher used in the University. The applications for which they are suited are summarised below:

	Water	Foam	Carbon Dioxide	Dry Powder
Wood, paper textiles etc.	✓	✓		✓
Petrol, oil, fats, paints etc.		✓	✓	✓
Electrical hazards			✓	✓

Water must **never** be used on burning liquids or electrical equipment.

All extinguishers are checked every 12 months and the date of last inspection is shown on the extinguisher.

Escape routes

Corridors and escape routes must be kept clear. Combustible materials should not be stored in corridors or on escape routes where they could become a source of fire and smoke.

Furniture and other items should not be placed so they partially block escape routes. Narrowing of escape routes will reduce the rate at which people can leave the building in an emergency. In a corridor filled with smoke, furniture can create a serious obstacle for someone who is trying to find their way out.

Fire doors will help prevent the spread of smoke and fire through a building and make it easier for people to escape. Fire doors should therefore be kept closed and not wedged open.

Fire drills and alarm tests

Fire drills are held in the Department once each year to enable us to test the efficiency of our fire evacuation arrangements.

The fire alarm for the building is tested each week on Wednesday at 10 am.

5) Electrical Safety

Accidents involving electricity are usually very serious. Anyone who comes into contact with a source of electricity and only receives a shock from which they can walk away should consider themselves very lucky. Faulty electrical equipment can also be a source of fire.

- 1) All items of portable electrical equipment in the Institute will be regularly inspected by a competent person. The inspection programme will be co-ordinated by Jonathan Cameron
- 2) If you have any reason to believe that any portable equipment is damaged or defective, you should
 - (i) Unplug the equipment
 - (ii) Take steps to prevent anyone plugging it in again (e.g. tape a warning sign over the plug)
 - (iii) Inform Jonathan Cameron who will arrange to have it repaired by a competent person
- 3) Regularly look at the condition of electrical equipment which you use. If you see anything that looks unsafe (e.g. a cracked plug, frayed wire) report it immediately so steps can be taken to have it repaired. Repairs may only be performed by a competent person AND BY NO ONE ELSE.
- 4) Electrical equipment, apart from new equipment, should never be used in the Institute without first being inspected and passed by a competent person. In particular items such as electric kettles and heaters brought from home should not be used in the Institute until they have been inspected. Contact Jonathan Cameron to arrange inspection of any equipment.

6) Housekeeping

Everyone can make an important contribution to safety by keeping the Department in a tidy condition

- Keep passageways and the area around where you work clear for access. People can be injured bumping into or tripping over items. In event of fire clear access to the fire exits will be needed.
- Keep cupboards and filing cabinet drawers closed. They can cause injury if left open and someone bumps into them.
- Never allow wires and cables to pass across places where people might walk. They can be a serious trip hazard. If there is no alternative route

ensure that a cable is covered by special rubber cable protectors designed for this purpose.

- Do not let rubbish accumulate other than in rubbish bins. Any accumulation of material which can burn increases the risk of fire.
- Keep any drink and food preparation areas clean and tidy. As well as looking unsightly, dirt in such areas can be a hazard to health.
- If you see a spillage on the floor that has been made by someone else, arrange for it to be cleaned up immediately before someone slips on it and injures themselves.

7) Building Maintenance

Estates Operations are responsible for maintaining the fabric of University Buildings and any fixtures and fittings. Buildings are regularly inspected by staff from Estates Operations. However those who work in a building are likely to be the first ones to notice that something is unsafe. Any building items requiring attention should be reported to Jonathan Cameron who will arrange for Estates Operations to be contacted. Any matters requiring urgent attention should be reported immediately directly to Estates using the emergency 24 hour number - extension 3939.

8) Access to Heights

Every year several people in the University are injured after falling while using an unsuitable means of access to reach storage above head height. The "unsuitable means of access" is usually a chair. The only suitable means of access are a step ladder or a "kick stool". Chairs (and particularly swivel chairs) should never be used.

There are ladders available in the Institute. To help ensure they remain in good condition they will be inspected every three months by Jon Cameron. If anyone discovers any damage to a ladder they should take it out of use and report it immediately to Jonathan Cameron.

When storing items on shelves do not place heavy items up high. They will be difficult to place on/remove from the shelves and if they were to fall they could badly injure someone. Instead place them at waist height or closer to the floor.

9) Manual Handling

Even in an office, back injury resulting from manual handling is a common cause of lost time accidents. Injury to the lower back, caused by a momentary lapse of good practice, may never recover fully and can be prone to relapse.

It is not only injuries to the back which can result from manual handling operations. Cuts, bruising of hands and feet are injuries which can occur when manual handling is not done correctly.

Before attempting to lift anything, size up the job. Do not hesitate to seek help with heavy or awkwardly shaped loads. Always look at the possibility of moving the load in an easier way (e.g. by using a trolley or some other form of mechanical assistance).

Anyone with any doubts about their ability to lift or carry a particular item, discuss it with their immediate supervisor. It will usually be possible to work out a different way to move the item.

Members of the Institute with supervisory responsibilities should ensure that people under their control are not expected to carry out manual handling operations which are likely to cause injuries.

10) Computer Workstations

Those working with keyboards and computer display screens for prolonged periods as a significant part of their normal work can be exposed to a number of health hazards. The principal hazard relates to the arms. The problems which can develop are often referred to as “work related upper limb disorders” The risks can readily be controlled by applying ergonomic principles to the design, selection and installation of computer equipment, the design of the workplace, and the organisation of the task.

The risk is only significant for those who use computer workstations intensively for a large part of each working day. Staff who are identified as being in this category will have their workstations assessed for compliance with workstation standards. They will also receive instruction on how to use their workstations correctly.

Jonathan Cameron has been appointed workstation assessor for the Institute and will carry out the assessments.

11) Specialised Equipment

The equipment listed below creates particular dangers. Only those who have received specific training and who have been authorised may operate the equipment. Lists of authorised operators are posted on the (insert locations).

The equipment also requires regular inspection and maintenance. The people responsible for ensuring this is carried out are also listed.

(Insert list of equipment and names of those responsible for each piece of equipment)

N/a

12) Chemicals

There are no chemicals used in the Institute which require special precautions. The following points should however be noted.

- Photocopiers can generate small quantities of hazardous gases. However photocopiers in the Institute are located in well ventilated areas and do not present a problem.
- The cleaners who work in the building use specialised cleaning chemicals. These chemicals are to be used only by the cleaners and not by staff or students in the Institute. (Similarly, none of the specialised cleaning equipment is to be used by anyone other than the cleaners who have been trained in its operation.)

13) New staff

Staff who are new to the Institute will receive training in our health and safety procedures. This training should normally be staggered over the first few days in the Institute with some essential training being given on day one. An individual's immediate supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the training is given. A training checklist should be obtained from the Institute Safety Adviser. It should be completed and returned to the Institute Safety Adviser when the training is complete.

14) First Aid

First aid arrangements are co-ordinated by Jonathan Cameron. Lists of qualified first aiders are posted on notice boards. First aid materials are located in the Administrative Office.

15) Accidents

Staff and students should report accidents as soon as possible to their immediate supervisor. The following must be reported

- Any incident in which anyone is hurt (regardless of how minor the injury might appear at the time and regardless of whether they need medical treatment)
- Any incident in which someone could have been hurt (but in which perhaps chance or "good luck" prevented injury). These incidents are sometimes referred to as near-misses.

There are several reasons for reporting accidents. The most important is to enable us to take action to prevent a similar accident happening in the future (perhaps with more severe consequences). We may also need to report the incident to the Health and Safety Executive or to our insurers.

Accident report forms are available from Jonathan Cameron. The form should be completed by the immediate supervisor of the injured person or the person in charge of the area where the incident happened. Completed forms should be sent to the University Safety Adviser within 48 hours of the accident. A

copy should be sent to the Institute Safety Adviser. Serious accidents should be reported immediately to the University Safety Adviser by telephone. (Extension 3894). The University Safety Adviser will ensure that the Health and Safety Executive and our insurers are notified if necessary.

The member of staff responsible for the injured person should initiate an investigation into the accident to discover its cause. They should contact the Institute Safety Adviser for assistance if required.

16) Inspections

Health and safety inspections are carried out to help us evaluate whether the Institute's health and safety arrangements are working in the manner intended. Inspections will take place at least three times each year and will be carried out by a team led by the Institute Safety Adviser. The inspection team will report to the Director of the Institute with its findings.

17) Waste

None of the waste generated by the Department should, under normal conditions, be hazardous. There may sometimes however be materials or items which could present a risk to those who have to remove and dispose of our waste (e.g. chemicals, sharp blades). Nothing which is potentially dangerous should be put in normal waste bins. Instead contact the Institute Safety Adviser for advice.