

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MAY 2021

Present: Mrs T Slaven (Convener), Dr A Arnason, Mrs L Benvie, Mrs S Blaney, Dr N Curtis, Mr A Donaldson, Mr R Ebel, Mr G Fisher, Mr I Lamb, Professor I McEwan, Ms L Henrad (AUSA Welfare Officer), Mr D Malcolm, Mr R Philp, Mr K Smith, Mrs K Smith, Mr E Stephen, Dr D Wall, Mrs J Walker, Mrs T White, Mrs D Wilson and Mrs V Amakiri (Clerk)

Apologies: Ms S Cooper, Mr S Carle, Mrs D Dyker, Mrs C Lawie, Dr A Petrie.

1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

1.2 The Committee was invited to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2021. A correction on the date, to be changed from 2nd February to 9th February was made and the minutes were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY (Minute 3.2. refers)

To be discussed in item 3 on the agenda.
Completed.

2.2 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY (Minute 3.3. refers)

Mr Fisher circulated the document to Committee members.
Completed.

2.3 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY (Minute 3.4. refers)

The Convener requested that the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy be brought back to Committee as there was no substantive discussion held.
To be discussed in item 3 on the agenda.

2.4 MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL ROAD RISK POLICY (Minute 4.2. refers)

Mrs White to facilitate including the MORR Policy at the next PNCC.
Completed.

2.5 MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL ROAD RISK POLICY (Minute 4.2. refers)

Committee members were invited to provide feedback to healthandsafety@abdn.ac.uk by and if there were no more substantive responses to go to PARC in June.
Responses received. To be included in PARC agenda.

2.6 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE UPDATE (Minute 5.2. refers)

At the Convener's request a template for members to feed in and out of the H&S Committee to be prepared.
Information from outstanding members has been requested.

2.7 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW (Minute 9.0. refers)

Committee members representing Schools and Departments to collaborate with the H,S&W Team regarding good practice, Guidance and Policy documentation in any of the outstanding identified areas in the Policy Review Programme that could be utilised centrally by the University, to feedback to Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie.

Ongoing.

2.8 ACCIDENT REPORT (Minute 11.1. refers)

Mrs Amakiri to prepare a table of incidents from similar reporting periods from previous years for comparative purposes in future reports.

Completed. See Item 10

2.9 REPORT FROM SUB-COMMITTEES (Minute 12.2 refers)

At the Convener's request, Dr Petrie to indicate clearly in the Terms of References (ToR), what would trigger an escalation of an issue to the H&S committee.

Completed. Included within the Consultation Policy. See item 4

3 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

3.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that only minor changes had been made to policy since the last meeting. It was agreed that the policy would be taken to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) on 17th May for the last check and if no substantial feedback is received, it will be taken to Policy and Resources Committee (PaRC) for approval. Mr Fisher requested permission from the Committee to change the name of strategy, once it was finalised, without the need to bring it back to the H&S Committee. This was also agreed.

Action: Mr Fisher

3.2 Mr Fisher informed Committee that the strategy was not attached to the policy as it was going to be a separate document and so the reference to Appendix A would be removed.

Action: Mr Fisher

4 CONSULTATION POLICY

4.1 Mr Fisher introduced the policy and informed the Committee that the policy included information from Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations. It also included details on how staff are consulted as included in the ToR referenced in section 6.7, when to escalate issues to the H&S Committee from other forums and it points out the general duty to consult with staff on matters which may affect H&S.

4.2 Mr Fisher explained why the policy was required and stated that it laid out our way of consulting with staff directly. He queried if there were any elected "representatives of employee safety" in the University as he was not aware that there were any representing Schools or Departments in the University. No one indicated they were aware of any.

4.3 Mr Stephen queried the timing of the H&S Committee meetings each quarter in relation to Schools H&S Committee meetings. Mr Fisher explained that a Safety Committee is required to meet every quarter by law and the recommendation is that any forum used for consultation on H&S matters should meet that frequently as information is required to flow both ways during a 3 month cycle.

- 4.4 Following a question about the requirement to have a Safety Representative present at Schools H&S Committee meeting, Mr Fisher affirmed that it was good practice to have a Trade Union (TU) Rep on the School's H&S committee as it develops good relationships and makes communication more efficient. He stated that the way staff are consulted with on H&S issues or how it is achieved by the School/Department is open to interpretation. A TU Rep should be open and honest as evidence from the Health and Safety Executive has proven that safety is better in an organisation where there is TU Representation.
- 4.5 A query was raised by Mr Stephen about consultation with the employer regarding H&S inspections, whether any member of senior management could represent the employer. It was explained that the organisation (in this case, the University) decides who would represent the employer, with a mechanism in place for informing and resolving issues.
- 4.6 When asked how the policies will be relayed to Heads of Schools/Departments, Mr Fisher clarified that every policy would go through SMT prior to going to PaRC, then Staffnet when approved. He added that information about consultation on, and publication of, policies would also be communicated via the ezine or similar.
- 4.7 Comments on the draft policy were requested to be sent to Mr Fisher by 30th June.

Action: All

Post meeting note: A word version of the draft policy has been circulated to Committee members for this purpose.

5 COVID UPDATE

- 5.1 Mrs Slaven informed the Committee that the impact of the external environment determines the University's response to Covid and suggested that we remain on track for the relaxation of the rules planned on 17th May. There are ongoing discussions with the Higher Education Sector regarding progress over the summer and operating in the next academic session in as safe a way as possible. She highlighted that there is continued positivity with low levels of transmission in the teaching and research environment. There is focus on transition into the relaxation of restrictions and a return to normal.
- 5.2 Mrs Slaven indicated that internally, there is work continuing with CPG focussing on the "Return to Campus Roadmap". Work is on-going in terms of planning for 1M+ distancing as the most likely scenario for the next session. The Committee members then discussed possible mitigations such as face visors, screens, etc
- 5.3 Mrs Blaney pointed out that Estates and Facilities (E&F) contractors were seen carrying out measurements of ventilation in some buildings and not on others. This led to detailed discussions on the order in which the buildings were prioritised, suggestions that already occupied buildings be prioritised, reassurance for staff about ventilation in buildings and room occupancy. Mr Fisher affirmed that the University followed the REHVA/CIBSE guidance regarding mechanical and natural ventilation. Mr Donaldson said that already occupied areas were being assessed with priority given to teaching spaces.
- 5.4 It was suggested that all staff receive communications, explaining the purpose of the measurement in order to allay fears about why all the buildings/spaces are not being measured.

Action: Mr Donaldson

6 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING PLAN (2020-21)

- 6.1 Mr Fisher highlighted that the red on the action by Head of Schools / Professional Services regarding 'Review of the terms of reference and coverage of the School and Department Safety Committees' was yet to be completed. He also clarified the colours used

- Blue – Indicated tasks related to the priority of stress management (which are also included in the MH & W Action Plan – see item 7).
- Red – Indicated changes since the report to the previous committee

6.2 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that a paper is being developed on the proposed strategy for restarting audits. This will come to the next H&S Committee.

Action: Mr Fisher

6.3 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that this, and other reports for information and discussion which followed, were all aligned to set dates to allow for future quarterly comparisons.

7.0 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING PLAN

7.1 Mr Fisher emphasised that the most significant task is the Stress Policy and this will be brought to the next H&S Committee. There is a task and finish group progressing analysis of the stress related content of the staff survey, identification of training needs and other items for inclusion in the policy. He said that most items are on track and nothing was too far off track.

8.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM

8.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that the MORR Policy had been updated and it was agreed that the Consultation Policy would be open to receiving comments until the end of June. He also emphasised that policies, best practice and guidance would be appreciated from Schools and Departments, to be used in developing University documents. It was agreed that Schools/Departments to share any Policy/Guidance documents or good practice they have with the H,S&W team.

Action: All.

9.0 FIRE SAFETY REPORT

9.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that the comparison was done between a 3-month period this calendar year and the previous calendar year. He highlighted that the UTDC (Unable To Determine The Cause) incidents could have been for a range of reasons including mechanical and intermittent faults. This led to discussions around differences in occupancy of residential and non-residential properties during the pandemic.

9.2 He stated that he had worked with E&F to check where external cladding was present on buildings, partly in order to inform a review of Business Continuity Insurance. He had visited 20 premises and carried out supplementary assessment on the cladding on 14 of them, where required. He stated that there was minimal risk to life, but a few recommendations had been made with respect to asset protection, which had been sent to E&F.

10 ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS UPDATE

10.1 Mrs Amakiri explained to committee that the comparison was between the 1st quarter of this calendar year and the same period for last year, similar to the comparison in the Fire Safety Report and that this would be achieved going forward with future updates. She invited committee to note the contents.

10.2 Mr Fisher clarified to the committee that the incident with the battery terminals reported by Digital & Information Services (DDIS) was not classed as an actual fire as reported, but investigations were on-going and if it was deemed to be an actual fire (not just an electrical fault), it would be reported in the Fire Safety Report.

- 10.3 A query was raised about what the trigger point would be to restore the Emergency Fire procedures, specifically the use of Floor Checkers. This led to discussions about building occupancy, availability of Floor Checkers/Fire Wardens and their safety when going against the traffic of people exiting the buildings. It was suggested that the trigger might be when the distance is reduced to 1M+, but at the moment, nothing was certain.

11 REPORT FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

- 11.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that since the previous H&S Committee in February, only the Foresterhill Biosafety Committee has met where a number of risk assessments were reviewed and approved. All scheduled maintenance of equipment within the containment level 3 facility is up to date.
- 11.2 Mr Fisher notified the Committee that the University will be getting a visit by the HSE on 12th May to inspect the Containment Level 3 facility and undertaking a spot check on the Covid arrangements in the Institute of Medical Sciences Building. The visit is a regular visit to the Containment Level 3 facility which was previously inspected in 2012 and 2017 and the purpose is to assess the adequacy of the physical facilities and controls of working with hazard group 3 pathogens. The facilities are currently working on *Salmonella typhi* and SARS-CoV-2 (Coronavirus). He confirmed that Dr Petrie and himself would be present and any significant findings will be fed back to the H&S Committee and as part of consultation, staff and TU reps will be informed.

Action: Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie

12 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING UPDATE

- 12.1 Mr Fisher stated that the data presented covers the period 1st January – 31st March 2021.
- 12.2 The return to campus e-learning and MIND e-learning have been reported at previous H&S Committee and the numbers in table 1 are less than that reported at the previous H&S Committee and this is reflective of the shorter time frame (i.e. 3 months).
- 12.3 Although all refresher reminders for the mandatory BeOnline eLearning were halted due to working from home, it has been identified that new starts to the University receive an invite to complete this training. Table 2 shows the number of staff who were allocated BeOnline training from 1st January to 31st March and the percentage of staff completing the training (new starts would also include temporary positions, student assistants, student ambassadors, etc). It should be noted that the description / titles of the School / Professional Service was defined by the University and forwarded to Awaken.
- 12.4 Further information has been retrieved from the BeOnline Management System and this is presented in Figures 1 & 2 in the appendix. This illustrates the percentage completion rate of the 3 mandatory elearning modules for both Schools (Figure 1) and Professional Services (Figure 2). In general, the completion rates for the mandatory training is approx. 50% for the majority of Schools and Professional Services with a number being noticeably greater or lower than this.
- 12.5 It was highlighted that completion rates should be significantly greater than 50%, it was considered that until a significant number of staff return to the campus under 'normal working' circumstances, the mandatory elearning will not be promoted. Promotion of completion of the modules, especially of the workstation training and assessment, will likely result in the generation of referrals that will be problematic to close out.
- 12.6 First aid at work training has continued and during the time period of this report, 5 individuals have completed initial 3-day training and 11 individuals have completed refresher training. No mental health 1st aid or suicide prevention awareness training has been delivered during the reported time period.

13 A.O.B

None.

14. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

14.1 The Schedule of the Committee meetings for this session have been identified as 6th May, 3rd August and 2nd November 2021.