

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Mrs T Slaven (Convener), Dr A Arnason, Mrs L Benvie, Mrs S Blaney, Ms S Cooper, Dr A Connor, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs D Dyker, Mr R Ebel, Mr G Fisher, Mr I Lamb, Professor I McEwan, Ms Louise (AUSA Welfare Officer), Dr A Petrie, Dr A Price, Mr K Smith, Mrs J Walker, Mrs T White and Mrs D Wilson

Apologies: Mrs V Amakiri, Mr S Carle, Dr N Curtis, Professor P Fowler, Mrs C Lawie, Mr D Malcolm, Mr R Philp, Mrs K Smith, Mr E Stephen.

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 25th August 2020. There were no comments and the minutes were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 WORKLOAD REVIEW GROUP (Minute 3.7. refers)

The Convener agreed to take the suggestion to address issues faced to the next UMG meeting. *It has been discussed at UMG, but no research projects have been identified yet.*

2.2 WORKLOAD REVIEW GROUP (Minute 3.8. refers)

Mr Fisher requested Committee members to email any suggestions for addressing workload and stress to the healthandsafety@abdn.ac.uk mailbox. *No responses received but addressed by the Workload Reduction Toolkit issued by Senior Management.*

2.3 UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE COMPOSITION (Minute 4.2. refers)

The Convener requested Committee members to provide feedback on the areas that they represent and the Committees that they attend in their areas where HS&W matters are discussed to the Clerk via healthandsafety@abdn.ac.uk. To be discussed in item 5 on the agenda.

2.4 UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE COMPOSITION (Minute 4.3. refers)

The Committee Constitution and Composition to go to Senior Management Team (SMT) before Policy and Resources Committee (PaRC) in June. To be discussed in item 5 on the agenda.

2.5 MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL ROAD RISK POLICY (Minute 5.3. refers)

Committee members were invited to provide feedback to healthandsafety@abdn.ac.uk by 18th December. To be discussed in item 4 on the agenda.

2.6 FIRE SAFETY REPORT (Minute 10.1. refers)

Fire Safety Report: Mrs Cassidy to liaise with Mr Cowie or Mrs Blaney regarding risk assessments for the Phytotron building. *Completed.*

2.7 ACCIDENT REPORT (Minute 11.1. refers)

Dr Petrie to promote the reporting of near misses. *Discussions have begun with a number of local safety coordinators – ongoing.*

2.8 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING REPORT (Minute 12.1 refers)

Mr Fisher to feedback to Student Experience Wellbeing team to investigate and determine how to increase the low completion rates of return to campus and MIND e-learning courses. Mr Fisher informed the Committee that this was completed as he had passed onto Student Experience Team. The Convener wishes information to come back to Committee on what will be achieved to close this out.

2.9 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING REPORT (Minute 12.1 refers)

Mr Fisher to facilitate the development of an e-zine to be distributed at local level, for highlighting matters discussed during Health and Safety Committee meetings for disseminating information to areas that Committee members represent. Mr Fisher explained that this remains to be progressed further before next meeting.

3 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

3.1 Mr Fisher introduced draft of policy after feedback from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and Mental Health and Wellbeing (MH&W) working group. This is currently the third draft. The policy has been substantially reviewed as the previous policy was four years old. This review is needed because of significant changes since September 2019. These include the creation of the Mental Health Policy Adviser and Wellbeing Adviser/Officer posts, rationalisation in working groups, establishment of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group and introduction of an annual Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, monitored by the working group and reported to this Committee and EDIC.

3.2 Mr Fisher explained that a 5-year strategy was being developed, for the academic years 2021-26. This had a working title in the policy, which might change, as there might be 1 or 2 strategies, dependent upon feedback received from the consultation. The Policy lays out definitions, commitment, etc. Mr Fisher requested comments. The convener clarified that input at this stage was being sought and Mr Fisher agreed that this was the approach to be adopted, then it would go to PaRC for approval. The Convener made reference that there is no track and change in the document. The committee members are requested to feed back any comments to Mr fisher by 5th March by email.

Action: Committee Members

3.3 Dr Connor queried as she is new to the Committee, how to get this paper. Mr Fisher to circulate a word version of the document to Committee members.

Action: Mr Fisher – Post meeting note: Completed 11/2/21

3.4 The Convener suggested that as there was no substantive discussion at this current committee meeting, this policy is to be brought back to the Committee prior to going to PaRC for formal endorsement from this committee.

Action: Mr Fisher

4 MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL ROAD RISK POLICY

4.1 Dr Petrie introduced the Management of Occupational Road Risk (MORR) policy and informed the Committee that there had been some feedback from the previous meeting which had been incorporated into this second draft. Consideration had been given to removing references to minibuses, as the requirements related to these are fairly complex. However, after checking with various schools, it became clear that these are used by some parts of the university and so this content has been retained.

4.2 Mrs White wondered if the Policy would be going to the Partnership and Negotiating Consultative Committee (PNCC). Mr Fisher indicated that it could do so but didn't think it would have impact

on terms and conditions or financial considerations for staff. It was agreed that it would go to PNCC for information.

Action: Mrs White

- 4.3 It was agreed that, in future, Committee papers would have full cover sheets with details of any previous consultation and the intended next steps for approval.
- 4.4 Mrs Walker indicated that she had not had time to review the updated version and Mr Fisher agreed that the Committee members could provide feedback to the Clerk via healthandsafety@abdn.ac.uk by the 25th February. If there were no more substantive responses, it would go to PaRC in June.

Action: Committee Members

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE UPDATE

- 5.1 Dr Petrie gave an overview of the history of this item. He explained that the terms of reference and membership of the committee had been agreed but that there was a need for feedback from all members on how they disseminated information to their areas and enabled staff to feed information or concerns into the committee when necessary. This is needed before the paper for SMT and PaRC, providing assurance on our discharging of statutory duties, can be completed.
- 5.2 Mrs Dyker highlighted that the Senior Vice Principal had recently brought a paper to SMT on school structure and this included H&S Representation, which might assist with the paper. The convener highlighted that it would be beneficial to have a template for members to feed into and out of this committee.

Action Mr Fisher / Dr Petrie

6 COVID UPDATE

- 6.1 Mr Fisher presented an oral update to the Committee, stating that there had been a spot check from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) at Sir Duncan Rice Library (SDRL) that morning. He verified the authenticity of the inspector by calling the number on the HSE page [here](#). It was confirmed that it had been carried out by an individual contracted by HSE but that no report will be issued following such visits. He stated that if any issues were identified, they would be highlighted during the visit. None had been reported on this occasion. It was emphasised that anyone carrying out a spot check will show identification and a letter of authorisation from the HSE.
- 6.2 Committee members were encouraged to check that page for information on what to expect if their site was visited and requested that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team are informed if there were any further spot checks and if any deficiencies were highlighted.
- 6.3 Professor McEwan queried whether spot checks were purely inspections, or whether documentation was checked. Mr Fisher informed the Committee that documentation was checked, including, the cleaning regime, what protocols were in place. The Convener and Mrs Dyker stated that were not aware that this has occurred elsewhere in the sector.
- 6.4 Mr Fisher further informed the committee that a phased return to face to face teaching is being pushed back, but risk assessments must be reviewed prior to any teaching restarting and revised guidance can be found on intranet [here](#).

7.0 HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING PLAN

- 7.1 Mr Fisher briefly explained that progress was indicated on the updated plan and that red text indicated changes since the previous meeting. The only changes in dates were in relation to the Stress Policy and related training, which had been put back 3 months, having taken account of pandemic related workloads and the recently published Workload Reduction Toolkit. The Convener asked if everyone was comfortable with this and it was confirmed there were no concerns, so the changes were agreed.

8.0 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING PLAN

- 8.1 Mr Fisher gave a brief overview of the plan and stated that the stress related work would be one of the strands/priorities in the 5-year strategy being developed. Most things are on track or close to on track. He informed the Committee that the Mental Health Policy Advisor was leaving in March, so there may be lack of progress on training and other parts of the plan, or it might have to be bought in rather than delivered in house. He explained that the MHFA training cannot be progressed as can only be done face to face and the Healthy Working Lives accreditation (from silver to gold) would have been submitted this month but has been put back until spring by NHS Scotland.

9.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW

- 9.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that the programme includes the 2 policies referred to in earlier part of committee. Mr Donaldson queried about Estates and Facilities (E&F) involvement in the Office Safety/Workplace Standards policy and it was clarified that input from E&F on ventilation, space requirements, etc., would be required. Following the request from the Convener for background on the policy review, Mr Fisher gave brief overview / review on policies, when he started and drafted the programme. He stated that some policies existed, but some don't or only have guidance available, some had gaps, therefore the programme was developed. He highlighted that there has been slippage in relation to the program, due to coronavirus.
- 9.2 Mrs Dyker gave a bit more background into the development of the programme and indicated that this was a big task with limited resource. The Convener was happy with the programme and satisfied that it was transparent but also stated that there was a need to consider what happens post-Covid. Mr Fisher highlighted that some schools have good practice that could be utilised centrally by the University and that there would be collaboration with Schools to produce good documentation. Mr Donaldson indicated that E&F could assist with some of the policies that would be suitable to be used. Mr Fisher requested that if there were any good practice / policy available in schools/departments, in any of these areas identified in the programme to feedback to him and Dr Petrie.

Action: Committee Members

10 FIRE SAFETY REPORT

- 10.1 Mr Fisher highlighted that he had been carrying out visits to buildings identified as high risk for physical assessments and others have been done as tabletop assessments. This is currently ongoing and on target. This approach was agreed by the Committee last year. Unwanted Fire Alarm Activations (UFAS) statistics are lower due to lower occupancies on campus. There have been no actual fires and no losses have occurred.

11 ACCIDENT REPORTS

- 11.1 Dr Petrie gave a brief summary of the near miss and accidents reported to the Committee since the previous meeting. Mrs Amakiri to provide a table of incidents from similar reporting period from previous years for comparative purposes in future reports.

Action: Mrs Amakiri

12 REPORT FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

- 12.1 Dr Petrie provided an update on the 2 Biosafety Committees. The stated that Foresterhill was much busier than Old Aberdeen; Foresterhill meets 4x per annum; Old Aberdeen meets 3x per annum with the next meeting likely to be May. This was originally for work with genetically modified organisms but expanded to include other biological agents. Dr Petrie also gave an outline on the Radiation Health and Safety Committee, which deals with radiation and lasers.
- 12.2 The Convener requested that it be made clear in the terms of reference what would trigger escalation of an issue to this Committee

Action: Dr Petrie

13 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING UPDATE

- 13.1 Dr Petrie outlined the training that has been undertaken since the last committee meeting. Since the last meeting, 118 people have accessed the return to campus training (99 completed). Thirty-one individuals have accessed the MIND learning and none have completed this. The Wellbeing adviser was looking into this to see if this is related to an IT issue. Although refresher reminders for the mandatory BeOnline E-learning were halted, a number of new staff were allocated the mandatory online training since the last committee meeting as part of the invite email. A number of staff have undertaken face to face refresher and new training for first aid.
- 13.3 Mr Fisher gave an update on Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training. He informed the Committee that this cannot be run at present online and Suicide prevention training has taken place with approx. 20 staff attending online sessions
- 13.4 Mrs Walker raised a query about MHFA not being acceptable but First Aid at Work (FAW) is. Dr Petrie confirmed that FAW is a statutory requirement. There have been extensions available for staff with FAW certificates from the HSE. Mr Fisher added that NHS Scotland will not recognise MHFA training unless it is face to face so Mental Health Awareness is being used to plug the gap and a waiting list is being kept until the MHFA training is available.
- 13.5 The Convener expressed thanks to members and contributions.

14 A.O.B

None.

15. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

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