

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3rd AUGUST 2021

Present: Mrs T Slaven (Convener), Dr A Arnason, Mrs L Benvie, Mr S Carle, Ms S Cooper, Mr N Curtis, Mrs D Dyker, Mr R Ebel, Mr G Fisher, Mrs C Lawie, Professor I McEwan, Dr A Petrie, Mr R Philp, Mrs K Smith, Mr E Stephen, Dr D Wall, Mrs J Walker, Mrs R Walker and Mrs V Amakiri (Clerk).

Apologies: Mrs S Blaney, Mr A Donaldson, Professor P Fowler, Ms I DrdÁková (VP AUSA Welfare), Mrs T White and Mrs D Wilson,

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 6th May 2021. There were no comments, and the minutes were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 COVID UPDATE (Minute 5.4. refers)

Ventilation all completed apart from a few rooms.
On-going.

2.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW (Minute 8.1. refers)

Mr Fisher reminded Committee members that Schools, and Departments are encouraged to forward any local policy documents, guidance documents, etc to the HSW team to be utilised in producing the University's Policy documents, Guidance documents, etc.
Completed.

3 WELLBEING STRATEGY AND SUPPORTING POLICIES

3.1 Mr Fisher reminded Committee that it was agreed to bring forward the three documents together as one – the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy which have minor changes made to it; the Stress policy, which was developed from old one and was being brought to the Health and Safety for the first time; and the overarching Wellbeing Strategy document, which is collaborative and is led by Student Experience, represented today by Mrs R Walker. He stated that comments are required within the next week as documents going to other meetings for final approval in advance of the start of next academic year.

3.2 The Convener reminded Committee members that the Health and Safety Committee is a formal committee and has a legal requirement and that there is a requirement for a final sign off/endorsement on the papers and/or policies and that this paper needs approval at this committee. She stated that the expectation is for this committee to endorse the papers to the next Committees, and she is looking for a positive discussion about the papers.

3.3 Mrs R Walker stated that step change has been moved to the strategy document as it fits better there. She highlighted that students and staff were consulted on causes of stress at a personal and university levels and the aims and themes were based around the feedback.

3.4 Dr Curtis advised that he passed comments to Mr Fisher the previous day regarding bike locker including storage. He further highlighted that the legal and moral background does not include

any moral background; the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy made mention of senior management and he considers that it should be the line manager supported by senior management. It was also highlighted that in the Stress policy, it should be clarified that responsibility in relation to employees includes Honorary staff and there should be a demarcation between Honorary staff and Honorary partners; and finally, in Section 7.2 of the document, monitoring workloads should also include management of workloads.

3.5 Prof. McEwan queried the approval process of the policy as he noted that Senate was not mentioned to be consulted. The Convener clarified that Senate were not required to approve as their responsibilities are academic deliverables and most of the other committees have Senate member representation on them.

3.6 Dr Anarson stated that he considers statements like 'Staff are expected to take reasonable steps to safeguard their own mental health' to be loose statements, which are less than helpful, and he queried what these steps would be. The Convener explained that the expectation is to recognise that there are multiple stressors, which can come from both within, and out-with work and the university can not necessarily address non-work stressors. Mr Fisher explained that the 'reasonable' statement is an HR position from the Employment Law. Unfortunately, no HR representation was present at the meeting, to provide an HR response. Mr Fisher considers that both inside and outside work and people have their own responsibilities, and this is a partnership with the University, and it is not intended that the university is relinquishing its responsibility. It was suggested that the wording be revised by Mrs R Walker to try and make it more understandable, employees should inform Managers if they have concerns in order that reasonable steps can be made.

Action: Mrs R Walker

3.7 Mr Stephen pointed out that in Section 7.2, there was an expectation on staff, but students were only encouraged and queried the difference. He also pointed out that some staff may not be comfortable to approach line manager. Mr Fisher clarified the difference in status of staff and students as employed and non-employed as the University was limited in the areas that can be enforced on students. He also stated that staff are able to go to multiple other sources (HR, Trade Unions) if don't feel they can discuss with their line manager. It was suggested that the wording be revised by Mrs R Walker. It was agreed that with the exceptions mentioned, the Committee endorsed the progression of the Policy to the next meeting with the minor amendments.

Action: Mrs R Walker

Post meeting note; Amendments to the documents have been made and the revised versions taken forward to SMT.

4 PROPOSAL FOR AUDIT STRATEGY

4.1 Dr Petrie informed the Committee that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team previously carried out Health and Safety Management Audits on Schools and Department to align their Health and Safety Policies with the University Health and Safety Policies. However, due to Covid and staff turnover, these have not been conducted but the Health, Safety and wellbeing team were looking to restart these audits when the University returns to campus on a more formal basis.

4.2 Dr Petrie highlighted that it has been recognised that the Health, safety and Wellbeing team do not have complete oversight of the significant activities being undertaken in schools as highlighted in some of the near-miss incidents that have been reported. Hence, the Health, Safety and wellbeing team are looking undertake 'themed audits' e.g. gas safety, biological safety etc.

4.3 Dr Petrie offered two options for the Committee members to choose from to help identify the themed/targeted audits. They are:

- A. Develop an audit scoping subset of questions and pass on to schools.
- B. Request schools to generate risk registers, with a checklist of things that might have been overlooked and send to the Health, Safety and wellbeing team as they are aware of what their significant risks are.

4.4 Mr Stephen highlighted that there are differences between audits conducted by Health, Safety and Wellbeing and those conducted internally by the Schools themselves. Mrs Benvie stated that DDIS have a standard form and report and offered to send to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team.

Action: Mrs Benvie

Post meeting note: The documents were sent to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team after the meeting.

4.5 Following detailed discussions, Option B was chosen with the request that key questions were included to encourage Schools / Professional Services to consider areas that may have been missed. It was agreed that Schools and Professional Services to send their risk registers to the Health, Safety and wellbeing team.

Action: All

5 COVID UPDATE

5.1 The Convener informed the Committee that an update was expected that day from the First Minister, in anticipation of the move to beyond level 0, on 9th August, with recommendations regarding distancing, rather than these being statutory. It is expected that next academic year will be much closer to normal than last one.

5.2 At CPG it was discussed that work was already underway to transition to 1m from 2m and timetable was presented at CPG today. Regarding the vaccination program, there was confirmation of a strategy for students vaccinated with non-UK recognised vaccines to get a single dose of a UK-recognised vaccine. There will be a pop-up vaccination centre in Butchart starting 1 week in advance of welcome week and this will be purely voluntary. The Convener expressed relief that numbers of positive cases have continued in downward track.

5.3 In response to the query about becoming 'open' without limitation following the transition to 1m, the Convener explained that work has begun on a phased return, managed locally and that there will be time for individuals to get used to being on campus. There was also a query about wellbeing in relation to the café being closed in IMS, the opening of which requires to be aligned with the phased opening of buildings. Following a query about whether the family members of International students who have travelled to assist are eligible for vaccination, Mrs Dyker confirmed that the vaccination program was only available for students at the moment.

5.4 There were discussions about first aiders, fire marshals, etc and it was confirmed that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team are aware and will need to bring these back online. There were also discussions about occupancy numbers, and maximum occupancies will now be calculated on room capacity and not on building capacity. This led to a query on the impact of the 1m distancing on toilet capacity. Committee members were assured that this was discussed at CPG paper last week and signage on doors will be adjusted in line with 1m distancing for maximum occupancy. The Convener also informed Committee members that this will be a plan of 4 weeks for prioritisation based on discussion with Research Planning Group and Estates and Facilities. Mr Philp advised that Estates and Facilities were currently waiting on a delivery of stickers to make adjustments with most of work to commence this Monday and most toilet work has started. The convener offered to share timetable.

Action: Mrs Slaven

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

- 6.1 Mr Fisher updated Committee members on the action plan. He highlighted that there was only one 'Red' item on the first page which was for Schools/Depts to have their Health and Safety Committees Terms of Reference reviewed. The Convener considers that this would be helpful especially as groups are being stood up as part of return to campus. Copies of the terms of reference to be sent to Mr Fisher once revised.

Action: All

- 6.2 Mr Fisher also highlighted that there were a lot of 'Greens' and some 'Ambers' and pointed out that some of the 'Ambers' will roll over until next year. The Committee agreed that it was happy for these to roll into the next academic year. He stated that PEEPs will be rolling out soon aligned with the return of students to campus, He also advised the Committee that the vacant Fire Safety Adviser position was being shortlisted this week.

- 6.3 Mrs Lawie queried whether mental health training will be restarted soon, and Mr Fisher advised that no face-to-face training was available, but some training was available online. He also informed Committee that the Mental Health Policy adviser position was to be filled soon.

7.0 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING PLAN

- 7.1 Mr Fisher advised the Committee members that most items are on track and nothing was too far off track, just a few things running late.

8.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM

- 8.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that there was significant progress on homeworking, stress policy, consultation policy.

9.0 FIRE SAFETY REPORT

- 9.1 Mr Fisher informed the Committee that there were higher figures of alarm activations in the Halls of residence due to students being present. For many it was unable to determine cause, mostly due to human behaviour that cannot be designed out. He gave a quick update on the Datashred lorry incident, which affected the SDRL and highlighted that this illustrates smoke spread is big issue. Following the question of what action can be taken going forward, Mr Fisher responded that some messages will be sent out and outlined actions that will happen. Mrs Benvie informed the Committee that the lorry tried to return 20 minutes later. The Convener expressed some concern over the number of reports from the Halls of residence.

Action: Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie

10 ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES UPDATE

- 10.1 Mrs Amakiri explained to committee that the comparison was between the 2nd quarter of this calendar year and the same period for last year. She highlighted that there was an increase in this year's incidents and pointed out that this may be as a result of more staff members being present on site this year as opposed to the same time last year. Mrs Benvie concurred that most of the near-miss reported by her were contractor-covid-related issues. The convener requested a comparison for this year and the last normal year, *i.e.* 2019 in order to test Mrs Amakiri's hypothesis.

Action: Mrs Amakiri

- 10.2 Mr Rainer stated that 'Incidents' in the title was not defined and requested clarification. Mrs Amakiri explained that it was an error and would be corrected.

Action: Mrs Amakiri

- 10.3 Mr Rainer queried whether the reporting periods was new and if it should be 'policy'. Mr Fisher explained that the reporting period was a result of the Convener's input into the Committee and gave background to the reporting period definition. Therefore, he confirmed that this was not policy as were not insisting this. However, the Convener suggested that it should be developed as good practice.

11 REPORT FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

- 11.1 Dr Petrie provided an update on the recent meetings of the 2 Biological Safety Committees and the Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee and also an update following the visit by the HSE in May.
- 11.2 Both Biological Safety Committees had approved a number of applications and the Foresterhill Biological Safety Committee also approved 2 areas of work working with live Coronavirus in the Containment Level 3 (CL3) Laboratory at the Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS).
- 11.3 Regarding the Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee, Dr Petrie highlighted that the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition own 2 high activity sealed sources which are not routinely used. Both the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and the local Police Scotland Counter Terrorism Security Adviser are of the view that if these sources do not have a use, then they should be disposed of. The School is current pursuing disposal options, but this will be at a significant cost and that disposal options have been reduced due to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.
- 11.4 Dr Petrie provided a summary of the actions that the University has (and will be) taken to address the concerns that were raised by the HSE following their visit to the CL3 facility in May. The HSE were satisfied with the measures that were taken and Dr Petrie thanks all those involved.

12 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING UPDATE

- 12.1 Dr Petrie presented an update on Health and Safety Training. This gave a brief overview of the Return to Campus training, MIND e-learning and the mandatory BeOnline e-learning. The Convener queried the number of individuals who had accessed the Return to Campus training and highlighted that there will need to be a plan agreed by the Campus Planning Group for the reinstatement of the e-learning as staff return to the campus.

Action: A Petrie

- 12.2 Refresher training for the mandatory e-learning training has been put on hold and only new staff have been allocated the training upon starting at the University. The Convener highlighted some concern concerning the lack of completion of the e-learning training

13. A.O.B
None.

14. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- 14.1 The Schedule of the Committee meetings for this session has been identified 2nd November 2021.