UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MAY 2020

Present: Mr A Donaldson (Convener), Mr A Acheampong, Prof D Anderson, Ms S Blaney, Mr S Carle, Ms E Cassidy, Ms S Cooper, Dr N Curtis, Mr R Ebel, Mr G Fisher, Mrs C Lawie, Mr D Malcolm, Professor I McEwan, Dr A Petrie, Mr R Philp, Dr S Pugh, Mr K Smith, Mr E Stephen, Mrs J Walker, Mrs D Wilson and Mrs V Amakiri (Clerk).

Apologies: Mrs D Dyker, Mrs L Benvie, Professor P Fowler, Mrs K Smith.

1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

1.1 The Committee was invited to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2020. The minutes were considered accurate and approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 BEONLINE TRAINING (Minute 3.2 refers)

Training on hold due to COVID 19. Prof McEwan asked about online training for new PhD students who start in September. Mr Fisher said that there was not much online training for students currently and this will need to be addressed as a result of COVID 19 with, perhaps, new induction/return to campus training. GF stated that it would be discussed further in today’s meeting (see minute 3 below).

2.2 REVIEW OF FIRE SIGNAGE IN LECTURE THEATRES (Minute 4.2 refers)

This has also been put on hold due to COVID 19 but will be addressed upon return to campus and use of lecture theatres.

2.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM (Minute 6.2 refers)

To include progress on tracker document on HS&W Policy Review Program as standing item on H&S Committee agenda – (See minute 9 below).

2.4 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM (Minute 6.4 refers)

To forward all comments regarding proposed changes to H, S & W Policy document to Mr Fisher. This has been completed.

2.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM (Minute 6.5 refers)

To make changes following comments received to H, S & W Policy document before taking to PaRC for approval. This has been completed and the policy published.

2.6 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM (Minute 6.6 refers)

To look into including names of people involved in/responsible for incidents in the incident report form. Not progressed to date due to other priorities.

2.7 HEALTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING PLAN 2019/2020 UPDATE (Minute 7.2 refers)

To forward to Mr Fisher, all additional request/comments for inclusion in the annual HS&W plan. No comments have been received; Action open for potential items for inclusion in the plan for 2020/21.
2.8 **Health Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2019/2020 Update (Minute 7.2 refers)**

To prepare a draft annual H, S & W Plan every year/cycle including updates from MH&W working group and progress to be a standing item on H&S Committee agenda. On agenda for information (See minute 7 below).

2.9 **Health Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2019/2020 Update (Minute 7.2 refers)**

To review the policy and implementation of H&S tours – This is included in the Policy Review Program (see minute 9 below).

3 **Current Health and Safety Arrangements and Social Distancing / Phased Return Guidance**

3.1 Mr Fisher referred to 2 extracts from time limited response risks and the medium/longer term risks. (HSC19:13, copy filed with principal copy of minutes). He also outlined the background to COVID 19 and the University’s responses such as cancelling events, home-working, online teaching, etc. He updated the committee on what the University has achieved since then - Identified that new homeworking policy was going through the consultation process; Indicated the process for those working at home with reasonable adjustments (i.e. phase 1); Highlighted phase 2 of this process as approved by SMT (i.e. basic kit provision to ensure adequate H&S standards for home working; Outlined Phase 3 as allowing staff back onsite to collect equipment and/or documentation to undertake planning/preparation for next semester teaching, etc. He affirmed that online training was suspended at moment due to some of content being relevant only to on site, some staff on furlough, etc. It will recommence when staff are back on site but might be carried out slightly differently going forward. Mrs Walker queried about whether any of the phases described would allow individuals to collect their operator chairs. Mr Fisher stated that chairs are not part of phase 2, although he will be meeting with Brian Henderson to discuss further. He noted that it was currently difficult to get chairs out of building due to social distancing and non-working lifts.

3.2 Dr Pugh requested that it be noted in the minutes that she raised the issue of staff having difficulties with homeworking and caring responsibilities for young children at home. She pointed out that these individuals still have their full workload, and this is problematic. She stated that the University should carry out a survey to gather data on these types of situations and then put in place proper system to re-distribute workload. She requested the H&S Committee to re-visit this idea and considers it unfortunate that this is not being done. Mr Fisher stated that he was aware that this has previously been raised and that the Senior Vice principal had replied that line managers should be addressing this and allowing flexible working and re-allocating work and felt that this should be left to line managers to address this, rather than carry out a University-wide survey. Mr Fisher recognised issues with this approach but considers that the survey is not reasonably practicable due to other ongoing demands. Professor Anderson considered that this should be done on a University level and that he is aware that not all line managers are taking these situations into consideration and that they don’t have resource to reallocate. He stated that the survey should not be too taxing. Professor Anderson further raised a query about compulsory MIND training as outlined in the University COVID-19 Risk Register. GF explained that this was not obligatory at present but would be upon return to campus. GF explained that MIND training different from mindfulness training, it was about mental health. It would help some staff during this period. Ms Cooper queried why Trade Unions were not carrying out the survey and Dr Pugh replied that a different survey had been issued by the Trade Unions already. She stated that Trade Unions could issue this questionnaire, but it would not provide a full coverage of University staff as information would only be received from union members and University may not act on this. This led to detailed discussions on responsibilities of line managers in managing their staff’s workload during homeworking to relieve stress, anxiety and mental health issues.

**Action: Mr A Donaldson**

3.3 Mr Fisher stated that the next step was expected to be the relaxation of the national guidance. He informed the Committee that the COVID-19 campus planning group meets weekly to look at managing a phased return to campus and social distancing requirements with national
announcements to be broadcast on Sunday. He explained that guidance is being developed by various bodies and it is unclear how it will look going forward. The group was looking at planning on principles, priorities and issues regarding opening buildings safely from a practical perspective, however an increase in numbers of people will cause issues. He stated that the rules are likely to change going forward. Mr Donaldson stated that there is likely to be ongoing communications. Professor McEwan flagged the Covid19 research and stated that there is ongoing planning with respect to this. He queried whether this is being discussed at School or University level. He also stated that John Hopkins has produced safety documents for returning to labs and will forward these to Dr Petrie. There were discussions around the safe access / egress into buildings and how to maintain social distancing and how it will be managed by the University and its impact on the capacity of buildings. Mrs Walker queried how the University buildings would be deep cleaned prior to re-occupation. Mr Philp highlighted that it is currently being discussed but no decision has been made on the approach. Mrs Walker queried whether it would be possible to revert to cleaners cleaning during the day and also raised the query of cleaning down labware between users. She stated that she is involved in some of the groups as a TRO. Ms Blaney queried if there was any positive COVID-19 case on campus. Mr Fisher stated that he was not aware of any positive case on campus but confirmed that there were lots of people reporting symptoms. He highlighted that people won’t be allowed back onto campus until all relevant facilities are available and there might also be a need to manage occupancy, staff working at home may have to be aware that may need to continue working at home and the University will not operate as pre-covid times. It was stressed that there was a need to control any return and that the University was looking at piloting some buildings for a return to work, especially research work as that is priority. Staff input is required as they might be aware of things of which members of the planning group are not aware.

3.4 Professor Anderson raised the need for early access to teaching materials. Mr Donaldson stated that the Campus Panning Group is aware of this and will be considering this during phase 3 of the process as outlined above. Mr Fisher confirmed that this is the case and that is being planned. He confirmed that access will not be allowed at the moment as it is not considered as essential travel and it is likely that some building areas may not be safe. Professor Anderson broached deadlines for teaching, stated the requirement of 6-8weeks for developing and approving teaching material. He considered that the scale of this likely to be small and time in office unlikely to be long. Mrs Walker queried the timings. Mr Fisher stated that he was aware that staff would require access long before September. Ms Cooper queried whether those working at moment were aware of how to put on their PPE properly. Mr Philp responded that PPE and training are provided in areas where it is currently required for working practices. Mr Malcolm considered that many people didn’t have proper training on this, but that Estates staff have in some areas had the proper training due to the activities they undertook. It was noted that a largely unrecognised risk was in removing the PPE properly. Mr Donaldson stated that the hierarchy of risks and risk assessment needs to be considered. He confirmed that PPE is a standard item on the campus planning group regarding supply chain, etc and that it is an important issue. Mr Fisher highlighted that activities where PPE is required are those where 2m distance can’t be maintained and that when back on site, other controls will be considered first and then PPE as last resort in the hierarchy of control measures.

4 UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE & TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 Dr Petrie referred to the report (HSC19:14, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) circulated with the agenda and draft terms of reference for the Committee. He highlighted perceived issues with the current arrangements, as raised by the interim Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Graham Cresswell, and asked for a view from the members present.

A debate followed around:

- The Committee’s remit for consulting across the University on H&S matters (e.g. policy);
- The fact that it was not intended to deal with matters that could be dealt with at a more local level, but could consider issues raised which had a University wide implication;
• The fact that previously, the expectations of the members of the Committee had not been clearly written and communicated;
• The feeling that the agendas and minutes should be published on StaffNet in a more prominent way;
• Items should be put forward in advance and AOCB items limited to those which were urgent and could not be raised in advance;
• The term “Management Representative” should be changed as it is now an outdated concept.

It was agreed that:

• The Committee would meet 4 times per annum in future, in order to avoid a long gap which impedes the business of the committee, typically between May and October;
• The draft terms of reference were agreed, subject to there being no significant objections to the contents from members.

Committee members are to provide feedback to Dr Petrie on the draft Terms of Reference, remit of the Committee and representation from schools/Departments by the end of the month (Friday 29th May).

Action: All

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING

5.1 Dr Petrie referred to the report (HSC19:15, copy filed with principal copy of minutes). There were discussions about the recommendations in the report and there was broad agreement that a more joined up approach to health and safety training, including sharing of information on “approved” trainers and training providers was beneficial. The recommendations in the report were agreed. Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie to draft a new Health and safety Training Policy, incorporating these principals to the next committee meeting.

Action: Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie

6. AOCB

6.1 Dr Ebel informed the Committee about the break-ins in Meston Building but stated that no chemicals were taken as far as they knew. He requested that monitoring of Meston Building should be increased in the current time. Mr Donaldson noted the request. He stated that the Head of Security (Keith Campbell) had been in touch with the respective Heads of School but that Mr Campbell would be advised of the concerns raised. Mrs Walker announced that a previous CCTV review had identified that some CCTV cameras could be moved around and requested if a camera can be moved to the Meston quad. Mr Donaldson stated that Estates is looking to move a mobile camera into this area. Mrs Walker informed Committee that she has not received any feedback from Police. Mr Donaldson informed her that Mr Campbell has replied to both Heads of Schools in the building, so thought that information should have gone back to her through her Head of School.

7. ANNUAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING PLAN 2019/20 UPDATE

7.1 The paper (HSC19:16, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) was available for information.

8. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTION PLAN 2019/20 UPDATE

8.1 The paper (HSC19:17, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) was available for information.
9. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY WRITING AND REVIEW PROGRAM UPDATE

9.1 The paper (HSC19:18, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) was available for information.

10. REPORT ON FIRE DRILLS

10.1 The paper (HSC19:19, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) was available for information.

11 FIRE SAFETY REPORT

11.1 The paper (HSC19:20, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) was available for information.

12 ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS UPDATE

12.1 The paper (HSC19:21, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) was available for information.

13 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

13.1 Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie to agree the dates of future Committee meetings with the Convenor so as to fit in with other key meetings and advise members.

    Action: Mr Fisher/Dr Petrie