

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT
2013/14

INTRODUCTION

The University Health and Safety Committee is a committee of the Operating Board and reports to the Board at least three times each year on the management of health and safety in the University. Two of the reports each year are summary reports and there is a more detailed annual report. The annual report is placed on the University's website as part of the University's publication scheme under Freedom of Information legislation.

The report has been compiled under the following headings:

- 1 Remit, membership and meetings of the Committee
- 2 Health and safety culture
- 3 Health and safety risk register
- 4 Central health and safety management arrangements
- 5 Health and safety performance of Schools/Support Services
- 6 Accidents in the University
- 7 Contacts with the health and safety enforcement authorities
- 8 Fire safety
- 9 Ionising and non-ionising radiations
- 10 Genetically modified organisms
- 11 Students' Association

1 REMIT, MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

- 1.1 The University Health and Safety Committee is a committee of the Operating Board and reports to the Board at least three times each year on the management of health and safety in the University. Two of the reports each year are summary reports and there is a more detailed annual report. The annual report is placed on the University's website as part of the University's publication scheme under Freedom of Information legislation.
- 1.2 The Committee met on three occasions during the year (in November, January and May). The remit of the Committee is in **Appendix 1**. The membership during the year is in **Appendix 2**. The term "health and safety" is used with reference to hazards to health and safety arising out of the University's activities.

2 HEALTH AND SAFETY CULTURE

- 2.1 During the year there have been wide ranging discussions on the topic of health and safety culture at meetings of the University Court, the Operating Board and the Health and Safety Committee as well as at meetings of the University's senior managers. There have also been discussions with other organisations within and outside the higher education sector to see what lessons can be learned from their experiences in strengthening their health and safety cultures.
- 2.2 It was agreed that, while the University was confident that it had robust health and safety arrangements which compared favourably with those of other leading research-led universities, it was important not to be complacent and to continue to seek new ways to improve.
- 2.3 The Principal affirmed an institutional commitment towards a step change in health and safety performance led by senior management and driven by a strengthening of the health and safety culture. It was agreed that it was necessary to better understand the existing culture and that the first stage would be to carry out a survey among staff across the University. The Health and Safety Laboratory's Safety Climate Tool was selected for the survey which was carried out from 28 April to 10 May. The Health and Safety Laboratory is now assisting with an analysis of the responses and this will be used to inform the development of an action plan to bring about improvements.
- 2.4 There have also been discussions around student safety. The Director of Student Life is leading a programme to promote safety awareness among students. The programme includes:
- Online student safety videos
 - A stall at Freshers' Fair promoting student safety
 - A rolling programme of key topics throughout the year using a range of media to maintain the profile of student safety. Topics will include:
 - Road safety
 - Safety on a night out
 - Avoiding Seaton Park and other places which are inadvisable during hours of darkness
 - All of the issues around alcohol
 - Fire safety
 - Rented accommodation
 - Reducing the risk of theft of personal possessions
 - Part time work
 - Maintaining good health including registering with a GP

3 HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK REGISTER

- 3.1 The University's Corporate Risk Register includes the risk that death or serious injury could arise from the University's activities unless health and safety risks are adequately controlled (Corporate Risk 2011-06).

- 3.2 To help manage this risk, the University's Health and Safety Committee has developed its own Health and Safety Risk Register which breaks the corporate risk down into 28 separate risks. A summary of the entries in the Health and Safety Risk Register is in **Appendix 3**.
- 3.3 A further risk was added to the Register during the year. This was concerned with food safety and the risk that the University could serve food contaminated with bacteria which could cause food poisoning. The Committee received a presentation from the University's Head of Catering and Commercial Services in which he provided an overview of Campus Services' food safety arrangements.
- 3.4 The relationships between the University and its arm's-length organisations in terms of their health and safety arrangements have received further consideration during the year. Agreements have been concluded with Aberdeen University Students' Association, Aberdeen Sports Village and the Rocking Horse Nursery through which the University can receive assurances as to the standards of health and safety management of these organisations. There have also been discussions with representatives of the Cruickshank Botanic Garden Trust which have clarified responsibilities for health and safety in the Garden.

4 CENTRAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 There is a commitment in the University Health and Safety Policy for it to be reviewed at least annually. The current Policy was approved by the Operating Board in June 2012 and it was reviewed in April 2013. In May 2014, following a further review, the Committee, for its part, agreed that no changes to the Policy were required at the present time but that a full review of the Policy should be undertaken during 2014/15 as part of the plan of work to strengthen the health and safety culture of the University.
- 4.2 The current University Safety Adviser will retire before the end of the calendar year 2014. Before the search for a successor begins, consideration is being given to how the central health and safety function could best be structured.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- 5.1 The Committee continues to monitor the health and safety performance of Schools and Support Services through a programme of health and safety audits carried out by the University Safety Advisers. The purpose of the audits is to verify compliance with the requirements of the University Health and Safety Policy and with legislative requirements. The current programme results in audits being scheduled in Schools and Support Services every three years. During the year the Committee received reports on audits in:

- Business School
- Research Institute for Irish and Scottish Studies
- School of Language and Literature
- Institute of Medical Sciences

Audit recommendations are assigned to priority categories: Priority One, Priority Two or Priority Three. Priority One recommendations are defined as major issues which result in significant non-compliance with the requirements of the University Health and Safety Policy. There were no Priority One recommendations in the above audit reports.

- 5.2 Progress by Schools and Support Services with the implementation of recommendations made in the audit reports has been monitored by the Committee and has been satisfactory.

6 ACCIDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY

- 6.1 The Committee examines accident data at each of its meetings. It also considers detailed reports on any accidents which meet the criteria for reporting to the Health and Safety Executive as well as reports on other accidents and near misses which are of particular concern. Accidents which must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive are those which result in a member of staff being absent from work for more than seven days or which

result in a student or member of the public being taken from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment.

- 6.2 Data on accidents are now compiled on a University-year basis (August to July) to permit comparison with data for the whole of the higher education sector in the UK which, in future, will be compiled on the same basis. A summary of accidents in the University during 2013/14 is provided in **Appendix 4**.
- 6.3 There were three accidents during 2013/4 up until April 2014 which required reports to the Health and Safety Executive. The Operating Board has already considered detailed reports on all three incidents.
- 6.4 A further two accidents have occurred since April 2014. These are reported separately on today's agenda.

7 CONTACTS WITH THE HEALTH AND SAFETY ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES

- 7.1 Health and safety legislation is enforced at the University by the Health and Safety Executive apart from in halls of residence and catering operations where the enforcing authority is Aberdeen City Council.
- 7.2 Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive visited the University on one occasion during the year. This was to carry out their own investigation into an accident at the University's Combined Heating and Power Station on the Old Aberdeen Campus in which a member of the Estates staff had been scalded by hot water. Details of the accident are provided in **Appendix 4**. The Estates Section developed a plan to address the two main findings of its own investigation, however the Health and Safety Executive's inspectors' view was that there had been a breach of the relevant statutory regulations in that both these matters had not been addressed at the time of the accident. However formal enforcement action was not instigated. Instead the inspectors' concerns were set out in a letter from the Health and Safety Executive to the University.

8 FIRE SAFETY

- 8.1 The Committee has continued to receive reports on progress with fire safety improvements following the carrying out of fire risk assessments and has been satisfied with the progress reported.
- 8.2 Each recommendation for improvement is assigned to one of three priority bands.
- Priority One recommendations require urgent attention.
 - Priority Two recommendations require attention in a defined period
 - Priority Three recommendations are minor matters.

Since the current programme of fire risk assessments commenced in 2010 there have been four Priority One recommendations and all of these were addressed immediately. There have been 181 recommendations in the Priority Two band and 175 of these have now been addressed. The Committee was satisfied with the plans to address the remaining recommendations and that the timescales for action were proportionate to the risks.

9 IONISING AND NON-IONISING RADIATIONS

- 9.1 The University is provided with a comprehensive radiation protection service covering both ionising and non-ionising radiation through an agreement with NHS Grampian. The agreement includes the services of a Radiation Protection Adviser and a Laser Protection Adviser. The Committee maintains a Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee to keep radiation safety matters under review and the Sub-Committee receives reports from the two advisers.
- 9.2 There have been no matters of concern which the Sub-Committee considered needed to be brought to the attention of the Health and Safety Committee

10 GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

- 10.1 The Committee maintains three Genetic Modification Safety Sub-Committees (covering Foresterhill, Old Aberdeen and the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health) which review and approve research and teaching projects involving genetically modified organisms and monitor the work for compliance with agreed precautions. All the Sub-Committees have reported that arrangements for controlling work with genetically modified organisms are satisfactory.

11 STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

- 11.1 The Students' Association is an organisation which is separate from the University and it is not subject to the University's Health and Safety Policy. Instead the Association is required by its constitution to maintain its own Health and Safety Policy. However the Association has agreed to provide the University Health and Safety Committee with an annual health and safety report. It has been agreed that the University Safety Advisers will provide the Association with a health and safety advisory service.
- 11.2 At the request of the Association, the University Safety Advisers carried out a health and safety audit of the Association in March 2013. The audit identified several areas where improvements were required in the Association's health and safety management arrangements. Matters of particular concern included the arrangements for overseeing the activities of affiliated sports clubs and of affiliated student societies. Recommendations were made in the audit report for improvements and these were accepted in full by the Association. The audit also identified areas of substantial strengths in the Association's health and safety arrangements. These included the training arrangements for minibuses and the management of the fleet of minibuses.
- 11.3 Subsequently however the individual with primary responsibility for Association's health and safety management arrangements left and was not immediately replaced. This resulted in a delay in developing a plan to implement the recommendations in the audit report. However at its May 2014 meeting the Committee received a report from the Association acknowledging the problems which had been encountered and setting out the health and safety improvement plan which the Association has now put in place. The Committee noted that the University Safety Adviser had helped with the development of the plan and would be supporting the Association with its implementation. The Committee has asked to see the Association's health and safety risk register so that it can better understand the risks from the Association's activities and the areas which need to receive priority attention.

*Report prepared by Nigel Corby, University Safety Adviser
May 2014*

APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE - REMIT

- (a) To advise the Operating Board on matters relating to general health and safety policy;
- (b) To recommend to the Operating Board actions necessary to implement University health and safety policies;
- (c) To monitor the extent of compliance with University health and safety policies and to recommend to the Operating Board actions necessary to address areas of non-compliance;
- (d) To maintain standing sub-committees to consider health and safety matters relating to use of ionising and non-ionising radiations and work with genetically modified organisms;
- (e) To provide a forum for consultation and discussion of health and safety matters;
- (f) To promote a culture of consciousness of health and safety and of continuing improvement in those areas;
- (g) To report at least three times each year to the Operating Board.

UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS DURING 2013/14

Professor P Morgan	Convener
Professor P McCaffery	Appointed by the Operating Board
Professor C Secombes	Appointed by the Operating Board

APPOINTED BY COLLEGES

Dr S Lawrie	Arts and Social Sciences
Ms A Shipley	Arts and Social Sciences
Dr C Harrington	Life Sciences and Medicine
Miss D MacKinnon	Life Sciences and Medicine
Dr R Ebel	Physical Sciences
Mr E Stephen	Physical Sciences

APPOINTED BY TRADE UNIONS

Mrs P Williams	PROSPECT
Dr C Sands	UCU
Mrs E Robertson	UNISON
Mrs A Innes	UNITE
Ms D Massie	UNITE

EX OFFICIO

Mr A Donaldson	Director of Estates
Ms M Dunn	President, Students' Association
Mr M McCorkell	President (Sport), Students' Association
(post vacant)	Manager, Students' Association

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr N Corby	University Safety Adviser
Mr I Cowe	Health and Safety Co-ordinator, Estates Section
Mr G Hope	Membership Engagement Manager, Students' Association
Mrs S Lodge	Assistant University Safety Adviser
Mr S Napier	Fire Safety Adviser
Mr R Philp	Assistant Estates Director
Mr G Robertson	Human Resources
Mrs J Sewel	Director of Policy, Planning and Governance
Ms J Tuckwell	Head of Residential Services

HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK REGISTER

Note: Risks have been scored using the same 6x6 matrix which is used for the University's corporate risk register.

Risk register at May 2013 – risk ranked in order of gross risk score

Rank	Risk title	Risk Score - gross	Risk Score - net
1.	Fire	30	12
2.	Asbestos	30	6
3.	Construction and estate maintenance hazards	24	12
4.	Condition of safety critical aspects of the estate	24	12
5.	Electricity	24	12
6.	Fieldwork hazards	24	12
7.	Students' Association activities	24	12
8.	Vehicle movements on campus	20	10
9.	Slips and trips	20	12
10	Laboratory/workshop hazards	20	10
11	Personal safety	20	9
12	Halls of Residence	20	8
13	Food Safety	20	8
14	Use of vehicles on the public roads	18	12
15	Travel on University business	18	12
16	Ionising and non-ionising radiations	16	4
17	Genetic modification	16	4
18	Printing and binding operations	16	6
19	Catering	16	8
20	Sports facilities	16	8
21	Children invited onto campus	16	8
22	Legionella	15	5
23	Work at heights	15	5
24	Manual handling	15	9
25	Asthmagens	15	9
26	Work related stress	15	6
27	Work placements for students	12	8
28	Computer workstation ergonomics	10	4

ACCIDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY DURING 2013/14

1) NUMBERS OF ACCIDENTS

	Staff 7+ days lost time	Staff 4-7 days lost time	Staff 1-3 days lost time	Staff all accidents	Students + visitors - HSE reportable	Students + visitors - all accidents	Total
2013/14 ytd*	5	3	3	70	0	20	90
2012	3	3	12	74	0	40	114
2011	4	2	9	84	2	31	117
2010	5	2	4	91	0	26	117

* August 2013 to June 2014

Note 1: "HSE reportable accidents" are those which have to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. For staff, until April 2012 these were accidents which resulted in more than 3 days absence from work. From April 2012 they have been accidents which resulted in more than 7 days absence from work. For students and visitors, they are accidents which result in the injured persons being taken to hospital.

Note 2: Accidents are now compiled on a University-year basis (August to July) to permit comparison with data for the UK HE sector which will, in future, be compiled on the same basis. Previously both the University of Aberdeen and other UK universities compiled accident data for each calendar year.

2) ACCIDENT RATES AND COMPARISON WITH RATES FOR UK UNIVERSITIES

Accident data for the whole UK higher education sector is compiled by the Universities Safety and Health Association. In the last two years there have been major changes in the way the data is collected and processed. An unfortunate consequence of the manner in which these changes was managed has been that there is no meaningful data for the sector for 2013/14 with which to compare the University of Aberdeen's accident rates. It is hoped that comparisons will be possible in future years.

3) SUMMARY OF ACCIDENTS REPORTABLE TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

Below are summaries of the three accidents which were reportable to the Health and Safety Executive during 2013/14 to April 2014. Full details of the accidents have already been reported to the Operating Board.

- a) In September 2013 an Estates engineer was scalded by hot water while operating a valve at the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Station on the Old Aberdeen Campus. Along with colleagues, he was investigating a leak from a flexible coupling on hot water pipework. The flow of water from the leak had abated however he attempted to close a nearby valve to ensure that the failed coupling was isolated from the remainder of the pipework so that there would be no possibility of a recommencement of flow. As he turned the valve to close it, hot water started to flow from the broken coupling. While trying to move away from the leak, he slipped and fell into the hot water. It was later established that the valve had been installed incorrectly during the construction of the CHP Station so that turning the control wheel in the direction marked to close the valve actually resulted in the valve opening.

Following investigations into the incident and into the circumstances which led to the faulty valve having gone undetected, the Estates Section:

- Put in place a programme of planned preventive maintenance for all valves in the CHP Station and those on associated distribution pipework; and
- Developed formal procedures for responding to emergencies in situations where a leak of fluid had occurred but had then ceased but where there was a possibility that flow could start again without warning.

- b) In December 2013 a member of staff was leaving the Sir Duncan Rice Library by the staff exit when she was caught by a strong gust of wind and blown into a metal railing. She suffered ligament damage, bruising and a suspected fractured rib. Weather records for the time of the accident showed wind speeds for the Aberdeen area of 38 mph gusting to 60 mph.

Subsequent to the incident specialists in wind engineering were retained to advise on the wind environment around the Library in terms of pedestrian safety. The study involved wind tunnel tests using a scale model of the building. Areas of concern were identified and architects have now been asked to advise on options for solutions to these concerns.

A detailed wind analysis has now been undertaken for the new building under construction at Foresterhill for the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health and similar surveys will be undertaken in future for all major new builds.

- c) In December 2014 an Estates electrician slipped and fell while walking along a short walkway on the flat roof of the Fraser Noble Building. The fall resulted in a fracture to a bone in his wrist. He had gone onto the roof with a colleague to go to a lift plant room to isolate a passenger lift in which someone was trapped. At the time of the accident there was a light covering of snow on the walkway which made it slightly slippery. Walkways on flat roofs are not part of the salt/gritting programme for roads and footpaths on campus.

Following the investigation into the incident the following actions were taken:

- Snow grips now form part of the toolkit for Estates staff who might need them for use on untreated surfaces;
- Signs are now displayed at the entrance points to flat roofs reminding staff that grips should be worn if conditions are likely to be slippery;
- Precautions for accessing untreated walkways have been added to the toolbox talk schedule for Estates staff.