

Report from the Meeting of the Health & Safety Committee held on 23rd June 2011

1. University Health & Safety Management & Committee Structure

The Committee received a summary of the University's health and safety management and committee structure including the University's Health and Safety Policy, minutes from the Health and Safety Forum meetings, the Health and Safety Committee's existing terms of reference and draft revised terms of reference.

The report had been submitted to the Committee in response to a request for clarification of the way in which the University's health and safety structure was managed at local level. It was agreed that the minutes of the meetings of the Health & Safety Forum provided the Committee with a good understanding of the work being undertaken at local level. The Chair of the Committee advised that he proposed to attend some of the Forum meetings in an unofficial capacity. The Committee agreed that this would provide a link between the strategic and operational levels and, recognising the importance of cascading information in both directions, would also serve to improve communications and highlight the role of the University Health and Safety Committee.

The Committee noted that the University Health and Safety Policy would require to be updated in light of the changed roles and responsibilities arising from the University restructuring.

With reference to the proposed revisions to the Committee's terms of reference, the Chair reminded the Committee that these were revisited each year as part of the annual review of the Committee's performance. In light of the need to review the current quorum arrangements to ensure future meetings were quorate, it had been decided to bring forward the timing of the review of the terms of reference so that any amendments could be submitted to Court for approval at the meeting on 6th July 2011.

The Committee noted that some elements of the existing terms of reference had been amplified to reflect more fully the Committee's responsibility for agreeing a strategic approach to implement the H&S Policy, ensuring appropriate H&S arrangements were in place within the University's health and safety management structure. The terms of reference had also been aligned with the key elements of the University's health and safety management system which was based on the Health & Safety Executive's model HSG65.

The Committee considered the revised terms of reference and quorum arrangements and commended these to Court for approval.

2. Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators

The Committee discussed possible key performance indicators (KPIs) against which to measure and review health and safety performance. Developing key performance indicators would allow the Committee to measure progress on a year on year basis. KPIs would also enable the Committee to benchmark performance against comparable institutions. It was noted that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provided guidance on developing performance standards although the HSE approach tended to be directional rather than numerical. Most of the elements highlighted in the HSE guidance were already reflected within the University's health and safety management structure.

Further work would be undertaken on the proposed KPIs with the emphasis on numerical indicators. Revised KPIs would be submitted to the Committee's October 2011 meeting.

3. UCEA HE Sector Health and Safety Plan

The Committee noted the UCEA HE Sector Health and Safety Plan for 2011-2015. The Health & Safety Department had reviewed the UCEA plan and had concluded that it complemented the work being undertaken in relation to the University's Occupational Health and Health and Safety strategies.

4. Health and Safety Training

The Committee discussed the issue of health and safety training at length.

It was agreed that all staff with a managerial responsibility for health and safety should undertake training as should all staff responsible for identifying hazards and carrying out risk assessments. The Chair of the Committee also stated that as the University Court had ultimate legal responsibility for health and safety, this should be included in induction programme for Court governors.

The Committee noted the extent of training available and the cost of delivery, asked what criteria were used to determine how much training and the nature of the training which staff should undertake. The Committee was advised that cognisance was taken of the need to target training based on individuals' roles and responsibilities. It was agreed, however, that further risk evaluation was necessary before an informed decision could be taken about the appropriate level of training required to enable staff to discharge their responsibility for health and safety commensurate with their role within the organisation. It was noted that the University could invest a significant amount of resources in health and safety training but it was important to take a balanced view of risk; there would be particular roles where more training would be needed. The University Secretary stated that local risk based assessment of training requirements could not be carried out at corporate level other than to set expectations and methodology. The Committee agreed that the chairs of the local health and safety committees should be asked to outline their training plans, based on existing risk assessments, following which a report should be submitted to the Health and Safety Committee at its meeting in October 2011.

5. Health and Safety Audit Schedule

The Committee noted the schedule of health and safety audits for 2011/2012. The results of the completed audits would be submitted to the Committee meeting on 26th October 2011.

6. GCU Health and Safety Statistical Report: September 2010- February 2011

The Committee received the health and safety statistical report for the period September 2010 to February 2011. There were no obvious trends emerging from the statistics. The majority of accidents/incidents were of a minor nature. No incidents had been reported under RIDDOR.

7. Occupational Health Report and Statistics

The Committee received the occupational health report and statistics for the period September 2010 to February 2011.

The Committee welcomed the progress being made in compiling the portfolio for submission for the Gold Level Healthy Working Lives Award with the aim of achieving Gold by April 2012.

8. School and Professional Support Department Interim Health and Safety Reports 2010/11

The Committee received a summary of the School and professional support departments' interim health and safety reports for 2010/2011 together with their annual health and safety reports for 2009/2010 which had been carried forward from the Health and Safety Committee meeting on 11th November

2010. The reports formed part of the reporting arrangements to provide assurance that the University was discharging its responsibilities in relation to health and safety.

9. Health and Safety Summary Annual Report

The Committee received the Health and Safety Annual Report 2009/2010 which had been carried forward from the Health and Safety Committee meeting on 11th November 2010.

10. Absence Figures

The Committee received a summary of the sickness absence statistics for the period August 2010 to March 2011. The Committee had previously asked to receive a regular report on absence figures which would allow it to see any trends which might have implications for health and safety management.