

Guidance

December 2020

Departmental Safety Committees

Occupational Health and Safety Service
HSD212M



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Introduction

Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (as amended) and Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (as amended) place a duty on employers to consult and involve their employees on health and safety matters.

Heads of Institution/Department/Faculty should appoint a health and safety committee. The role of the committee is to oversee and advise senior management on specific health and safety matters to ensure prioritisation and implementation of measures to manage the risks of departmental activities, whenever justified by the nature and extent of risks. In those departments where the appointment of a committee is not justified, health and safety should be a standard item on the agenda of departmental management meetings. For those institutions for whom a safety committee is not justified, the decision should be regularly reviewed in consultation with the Safety Office.

1. Role of Committees in management of Health and Safety – key principles to adopt

Health and safety committees play an essential role in the management of health and safety. It is essential that the committee is familiar with the Departmental health and safety management system which should include a 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' cycle of improvement (see HSE document -HSG65 for further information).



The tables below will help the committee conduct an assessment to ensure that each area of management is in place. If your department does not have systems in place for each element, the committee should set initial targets for improvement and ensure that these fundamental prerequisites be implemented.

PLAN		
<i>Key aims</i>	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
To determine the Departmental health and safety policy. To plan for the implementation of the health and safety policy. To identify key hazards and risks. To set main strategic health and safety objectives for the department based on committee findings.	Identify and seek to control health and safety risks. Ensure compliance with legislation and guidance. Create a statement of intent. Ensure that the policy has an arrangements section, which sets out policy and procedures for all significant risk areas. Significant risks relate to meeting regulatory compliance targets e.g. PSSR, LEV, in addition to hazards. Ensure that the policy sets out clear roles and responsibilities for health and safety- include what each role has to do, how it will be done, and who will do it. Identify training needs and set key performance indicators and targets.	Refer to the University Health and Safety Policy. Use the example workplace hazards list to develop a risk profile for the department, which should be included in your arrangements section of your policy (see Appendix 5). Use Safety Office guidance. Ensure the committee holds a record of the roles and responsibilities for key health and safety stakeholders. Set health and safety as a permanent agenda item on all staff meetings, so as to ensure there is a means of communication for all staff members.

DO		
<i>Key aims</i>	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
To ensure staff are engaged and significant risks are identified. To communicate to staff the health and safety requirements. To ensure that significant risks are assessed and recorded. Implement the plan.	Ensure that the department has a systematic approach to risk assessment and that significant assessments are documented. Use induction training to ensure that all staff, students, contractors and visitors are aware of their responsibilities. Ensure that specialists have safety training according to their role.	Ensure there is a means of communication for all staff members – staff safety intranet site, safety bulletin/email, and health and safety concerns/complaint procedure. Set standards for risk assessment. Have standard templates for the department to use and provide training for those who complete them. The Safety Office website has templates that can be used. Ensure that assessments are always available at the point of use. Ensure that a system is in place for the recording of training content and attendance.

CHECK		
<i>Key aims</i>	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
To ensure departmental health and safety inspections are conducted which focus on the implementation of the policy and key departmental risks. To monitor a sample of risk assessments to ensure quality and consistency. To monitor accident, incident and near miss reports. To monitor results of staff training and behaviour change. To take part in the University Safety Office audit program when requested.	The committee should have an internal inspection programme in place, which is proportional to departmental risk. Inspections include checks on the use of key departmental policy and procedures as set out in the arrangements section of the policy. Ensure that accident/incident data is collated and reported at each committee meeting. Conduct staff safety surveys to monitor safety culture and consider the responses at committee. Ensure that staff are available for interview at Safety Office audits and inspections.	Inspection templates can be found on the Safety Office website. Use the sample committee agenda (see Appendix 2) to ensure that all expected monitoring activity is covered. Assign committee roles responsible for monitoring and inspection. Ensure that any actions are included on the Departmental Safety Action Plan.

ACT		
<i>Key aims</i>	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
To ensure that accident/incident/near misses are investigated, and have been acted upon. To act upon inspection report findings. To act upon Audit report findings. To feedback and continually improve the health and safety policy and procedure. To respond to and act upon health and safety complaints and concerns raised. To report to the Head of Department who should escalate major concerns to the Safety Office.	Ensure that following reports, suitable controls have been implemented to prevent recurrence. Ensure that Safety Office inspection/audit report actions are completed within the given target timeframes. Formally report committee findings to the Head of Department. Conduct an annual safety review, which ensures that new objectives can be set for the department.	Accident investigation advice can be gained from the Safety Office. Always contact the Safety Office for advice and guidance as necessary. Use the Safety Improvement Plan and Action Plan to document your progress (see Appendix 3 and 4).

2. Safety Committee Roles and Membership

The health and safety committee does not have to include a definite number of representatives but it is important that you have an accurate representation from staff across the department.

Ensure that the committee membership is reviewed each year, and includes representatives from:

- Management - who have the authority to give proper consideration to views and recommendations; if possible include a representative from the most senior level of management possible to show commitment and leadership.
- Employees - either appointed by a Trade Union, elected by staff, or a combination of both, who have knowledge of the work of those they represent.
- Representatives of others in the workplace - such as regular contractors.
- Specialists who work in the department e.g. health and safety, radiation, biological who should be included because of their specific competencies.

Roles

Key roles include the following:

Chairperson - Ensure that a chairperson is appointed. Previous experience is preferable. The chairperson must have sufficient authority/standing to ensure the plan-do-check-act cycle is able to be fully implemented. A Vice Chair can also be useful to cover absence and to share committee management responsibilities.

Departmental Safety Officer – Ensure that a Departmental Safety Officer (DSO) is appointed, or that it is clear in a person's job description that this is part of their day-to-day role. The DSO role defaults to the Head of Institution if no-one is appointed.

Secretary – A secretary should be appointed to manage the schedule of meetings. This role may also include minute taking. It is recommended that meetings be held once an academic term, with an annual review meeting in summer.

All committee members have a role and must:

- Promote good practice within their work area.
- Bring to committee any significant findings from risk assessment, accident investigation and local inspections to share findings, experience and good practice for control measures/SOP.
- Ensure that the views of departmental staff are communicated effectively.
- Share knowledge gained on training and give reviews of training courses.
- Attend meetings regularly, read and review guidance.
- Participate in departmental safety inspections.

3. Committee Terms of Reference

Once established the committee should formulate a terms of reference (there is an example/template in Appendix 1). The terms of reference should include the membership, purpose, aims and objectives, arrangements for responsibility and documents for approval.

4. Safety Improvement Plan and Action Plan

The committee should set and monitor a Safety Improvement Plan for the department with the approval from the Head of Department. The Safety Improvement Plan should document the main strategy for continuous health and safety improvement, which is formulated from the committee findings and review. The objectives should be reviewed and updated at the Annual Review safety committee meeting.

Smaller targeted work to achieve these should be placed in the Safety Action Plan, which should be a standard agenda item at each committee meeting to ensure progress. Actions necessary from inspections, accident and incidents and reviews should also be included on the Safety Action Plan.

Appendix 1

<Name of Department> Health and Safety Committee Terms of Reference

Purpose(s)

1. Ensure that the <Name of Dept./Faculty> policies, procedures and working practices with regard to health and safety meet or exceed legal and statutory obligations, with the object of promoting the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and others.
2. Ensure that the <Name of Dept./Faculty> policies, procedures and practices with regard to financial, HR and data protection regulations meet the statutory requirements, and are effective and appropriate to the level of identified risk.
3. Ensure that the department staff are accurately represented on the committee.

Membership

The Committee Chair: <enter role/name>

The Committee Secretary: <enter role/name>

The Departmental Safety Officer <enter role/name>

Membership of the Committee will be made up of the following:

1. Director/senior management team member
2. Departmental Safety Officer
3. PI representative
4. Student/Post Grad representative
5. Specialist officer e.g. Biological Safety Officer, Radiation Protection Supervisor, Laser Safety Officer
6. Human Resources representative
7. Facilities/building manager
8. Fire Safety Manager
9. Chief First Aider
10. Union safety representative
11. (ensure that you also have representatives for all key risk areas in your department)

Meeting Arrangements and Reporting

The Committee shall meet **once in each University Term (advised)**, with one additional annual meeting to review annual safety inspection and audit results.

Minutes will be made available to the **Executive Committee/Senior Leadership Team** and all staff via the <enter communication method>. Minutes are also copied to the Safety Office.

The <Secretary (or state other role)> shall be responsible for management of the Committee papers and documentation, with oversight from the <Head of Department/Director>.

Committee Responsibilities

The Committee shall:

1. Have responsibility for reviewing and approving the Health and Safety Policy;
2. Annually review the Department Health and Safety Management System and any safety- and compliance-related department documents as appropriate. This will include

the setting and monitoring of performance targets and will document and review these targets on the Safety Improvement plan and Safety Action Plan.

3. Ensure that the Senior Management Team and the Executive Committee are kept informed of their safety-related responsibilities and duties and of any relevant regulatory or industry standard updates and their impacts and the department's response(s) to such changes;
4. Receive reports relating to any instances of:
 - (a) Accidents, Incidents and near misses, some of which may require investigation
 - (b) Non-compliance with statutory, University or departmental safety regulations and/or guidance;
 - (c) Receive and review incidences of work related ill health or wellbeing concerns.
5. Plan internal Health and Safety inspection program, receive and review reports from all departmental safety- and/or compliance-related inspections and audits;
6. Receive, review and approve the Departmental Safety Officers Annual/Termly Safety Report, prior to final approval by the <Departmental Management Committee>.
7. Communicate its activity so as to promote an active Health and Safety Culture amongst staff and students.
8. Monitor the safety culture within the <Faculty/Department> through staff and student surveys and audit.
9. Consider any health and safety issues relating to building changes.
10. Ensure that following reports risk assessments and policies/procedures are reviewed so as to minimize recurrence and improve safety standards.
11. Ensure that findings are reported to the central University safety committees as necessary.
12. To review annually, and revise if necessary the membership and terms of reference of the committee.

Documentation for Committee Approval

Document	Type	Review Frequency	Next Review Date
Safety Policy	Policy	Annual	
Safety Management System/Manual	Policies and Procedures	Variable	
Risk Register	Record/ Procedure	Quarterly	
Department EAP	Procedure	Annual	
Safety Training Register	Record	Six monthly	
Safeguarding Policy	Policy	Annual	
Business Continuity Plans	Procedure	Annual	
Fire Risk Assessments and DOFRAs	Risk Assessment	Annual	
Data Protection Policy	Policy	Annual	
Data Register	Record	Six Monthly	
Accident and Incident, work related ill health Record	Record	Each meeting	
Risk Assessment Index	Record	Six Monthly	

Departmental Health and Safety Improvement plan			
Departmental Safety Action Plan			
Add/adapt as necessary for your department			

Appendix 2

Safety Committee Agenda – Template

Date:-

Time:-

Invitations Sent:-

1.	Apologies for Absence
2.	Review of last meeting Minutes
3.	Review of Safety Action Plan and Objectives
4.	Departmental Safety Officer Report
5.	Fire Safety Manager Report
6.	First Aid Report
7.	*Specialist area reports e.g. Radiation, Biological, Chemical, Physical
8.	Internal Inspections and Audit
9.	Health and Safety Training
10.	Compliance relating to H & S e.g. HTA, PSSR, LEV
11.	Accidents and Incidents
12.	Any other business
13.	Review of Terms of Reference and date of next meetings

Appendix 3

Safety Improvement Plan - <i>(Name of Department)</i>	
Description of Safety Underperformance	<Enter a description of the nature of the safety underperformance>
Aim of the Safety Improvement Plan	<Enter the overall aim of the Safety Improvement plan>
Plan start date	
Plan end date	
Safety management area for improvement	<Enter - Plan, Do, Check, Act>

Safety Improvement Objectives What has to be done to improve safety performance, include exact legal /compliance standard	Priority Enter low, medium or high	Success Criteria How will you know when safety standards have been met?	Additional resource required What additional resource or support is needed to meet expected standard?	Review Schedule When will progress be reviewed? How will evidence be collected? Who will review progress?	Objective Outcome When will final review pf plan be undertaken and by whom? What is the final outcome? What action will be taken if expected standards are not met?
<Enter improvement objective 1>		<detail success criteria for objective 1>	<detail the additional resource required to succeed in achieving objective 1>	<Detail when progress for objective 1 will be reviewed and by whom>	<Detail the final outcome, date for completion, the specific consequences of non-completion and action to be taken if not met>
<Enter improvement objective 2>		<detail success criteria for objective 2>	<detail the additional resource required to succeed in achieving objective 2>	<Detail when progress for objective 2 will be reviewed and by whom>	<Detail the final outcome, date for completion, the specific consequences of non-completion and action to be taken if not met>

<->					
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Overall outcome if plan objectives are achieved/ not achieved	<Enter overall outcomes/consequences if the Safety Improvement Plan is/is not completed satisfactorily by the plan end date>
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Departmental Safety Officer

Head of Department

Date

Date

Appendix 4

Safety Action Plan – <i>(Name of Department)</i>					
Safety Issue or Hazard (as defined in Safety Improvement Plan Objectives)	Action required	Person Responsible	Date of the action to be completed	Review date	Comment
High Priority					
<detail objective number and hazard/issue>	<detail what is to be established and implemented>	<detail name and role>	<enter date>	<enter date>	<enter actions taken to complete action>
Medium priority					
<detail objective number and hazard/issue>	<detail what is to be established and implemented>	<detail name and role>	<enter date>	<enter date>	<enter action taken to complete action>
Low Priority					
<detail objective number and hazard/issue>	<detail what is to be established and implemented>	<detail name and role>	<enter date>	<enter date>	<enter action taken to complete action>

Appendix 5 – Workplace Hazard identification

1. Purpose

This document provides a list of the majority of workplace hazards found in the department. The list is intended to be used to help departments identify 'hazards' or populate sections of risk matrices, risk registers etc. It can also be used as a guide for those conducting risk assessment.

2. Definitions

Hazard is defined by the University as **“the presence, or absence, of something that can lead to harm”**.

Harm is a broad concept that always includes injury and ill-health to people, as well as sometimes taking into account any of the following elements: damage to property, plant, products or the environment, production losses or increased liabilities. Many organisations focus only on harm-to-people, including the British Standards Institution.

3. Hazard categorisation

A convenient way to identify hazards is to group them into broad classes, these include:

- I. **Ergonomic hazards** – repetitive or restricted/constrained movements, etc.
- II. **Psychosocial hazards** – fatigue, stressors, violence, etc.
- III. **Physical and workplace hazards** – noise, pressure, vibration etc.
- IV. **Hazardous substances and materials including:**
 - a. **Biological** – bacteria, viruses, insects, plants, birds, animals, etc.
 - b. **Chemical** – corrosives, flammables, dusts, toxins, sensitiser's etc.
- V. **Radiation**
 - a. Ionising radiation
 - b. Non-ionising radiation

A more detailed list for each of the above hazard categories is given below.

I. Ergonomic – managing the interface between people and the working environment:

- Manual handling (lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling) – assessed, reduced, controlled
- Posture hazards – identified and reduced
- Use of DSE - assessed
- Repetitive actions - assessed
- Awkward positions – identified and reduced
- Restricted space – identified and assessed

II. Psychosocial Hazards – managing mental health:

- Bullying/harassment – systems in place to manage
- Fatigue – systems in place to recognise and reduce
- Nuisance noise – people able to raise issues, actioned where appropriate
- Violence/aggression – potential hotspots (e.g. customer services) identified and managed
- Workplace stressors – systems in place to identify and manage stressors

III. Physical and Workplace Hazards

- Electrical hazards - PAT protocol followed, fixed wiring inspection/testing. Consider:
 - Contact with electricity (e.g. exposed live wires)
 - Work with high voltage electricity (hazards e.g. arcing, arc flash)
- Machinery or equipment hazards (e.g. workshop machines, plant etc.) - PUWER protocol followed. Consider:
 - Crush injuries (crushed by moving parts)
 - Cutting or shearing (caught on or between edges)
 - Drawing-in (pulled into)
 - Ejection (parts flying off)
 - Entanglement (e.g. clothing, caught/wrapped in)
 - Entrapment (trapped in)
 - Friction and abrasion (rubbing)
 - Impact (hit by moving parts)
 - Stabbing or puncture (pierced by)
 - Stored energy (hydraulic, pneumatic, gravity, high pressure, etc.)
 - Vibration (e.g. vibration white finger)
 - Noise – Statutory thresholds followed (over 80dBA first action level, 87dBA)
- Slips / Trips / Falls - Systems in place to manage. Consider:
 - Slippery Floors (spills e.g. water, diesel, chemical)
 - Trip Hazards (e.g. trailing cables)
- Work at, or falls from, height (fragile roofs, holes ,ladders, scaffolding, racking)
- Temperature hazards – potential for harm identified and managed (e.g. PPE). Consider:
 - Cold contact
 - Hot contact
 - Temperature exposure (heat stress, hyperthermia)
- Transport Risks:
 - Dangerous goods shipping
 - Using personal vehicle for work

- Vehicle manoeuvres (including reversing and loading)
- Other hazards (not exhaustive):
 - Fire – exposed to
 - Hit by a moving, flying or falling object
 - Hit something fixed or stationary (e.g. head bangs, body bumps)
 - Needle-stick (clean, dirty)
 - Sharps (scalpels, microtomes, glass, etc.)
 - Weather – considered when required (e.g. outdoor activities, overseas work/placements)

IV. Hazardous Substances and Materials – identified and managed

a. Biological Materials – including:

- Animals and/or animal samples (also consider animal dander, urine etc.)
- Clinical samples
- Legionella/Legionnaires' Disease
- Pathogens and Micro-organisms (including GM)
 - Hazard Group 1 (considered unlikely to cause disease)
 - Hazard Group 2
 - Hazard Group 3
 - Hazard Group 4 – **(N.B. - the University does not permit the work with Hazard Group 4 agents)**
 - Schedule 5 substances
- Storage of Hazardous biological substance – stored safely, access restricted
- Transport of hazardous biological substances (on/off site) – packed safely

b. Hazardous Chemicals – including:

- Allergens
- Asbestos
- Asphyxiants (N₂, CO₂ etc.)
- Chemical form (liquids, powders, dust, sprays as have different exposure potential)
- Carcinogen, mutagens, substances toxic to reproduction (CMSTRs)
- Controlled Substances (under Misuse of Drugs Act, Poisons Rules, Chemical Weapons Convention etc.)
- Corrosives (skin, eyes)
- Cryogenic materials
- Environmentally hazardous substances
- Flammables
- Irritants (eye, skin)
- Lead
- Mercury
- Sensitisers (skin, respiratory)
- Storage of hazardous substances (i.e. chemical storage) – stored safely, access restricted
- Toxic substances (acute, reproductive, target organs)
- Transport of hazardous substances (on/off site) – packed safely

V. Radiation

- a. **Ionising radiation (N.B. compliance with safety, environmental and other regulations** – consultation with Radiation Protection Adviser / Radioactive Waste Adviser required for new work and significant changes to existing work):
 - Radioactive materials including unsealed (open) sources and sealed (closed) sources
 - Naturally occurring radioactive materials
 - Uranium and thorium compounds
 - X ray radiation generators including electron microscopes
 - Gamma radiation generators
 - Transport and movement of radioactive materials
 - Security of radioactive materials (categorised for sealed sources including HASS)
- b. **Optical and electromagnetic fields** (non-ionising radiation – “non-trivial” sources):
 - Lasers (consultation with Laser Protection Adviser for significant new work)
 - Ultraviolet (UV) radiation
 - Broadband optical radiation sources
 - Electromagnetic fields
 - Static magnetic fields

For further info on these subjects see <https://www.safety.admin.cam.ac.uk/>



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Safety Office
Greenwich House
Maddingley Road
Cambridge CB3 0TX

Tel: 01223 333301
Fax: 01223 330256
safety@admin.cam.ac.uk
www.safety.admin.cam.ac.uk/

HSD212M
© University of Cambridge