

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3rd FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Mrs T Slaven (Convener), Mrs L Benvie, Professor D Blackbourn, Mr S Carle, Ms S Cooper, Mr M Cowie, Mr N Curtis, Ms I DrdÁková (VP AUSA Welfare), Dr E Ebel, Mr G Fisher, Mrs C Lawie, Mr D Malcom, Professor I McEwan, Mr R Philp, Mrs K Scaife, Mrs K Smith, Mr E Stephen, Dr D Wall, Mrs T White, Mrs D Wilson

Apologies: Mrs V Amakiri, Mrs D Dyker, Mrs R Walker (Mrs K Scaife attending for item 9)

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 2nd November 2021. The minutes were approved with no comments.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 REINSTATEMENT OF E-LEARNING (Minute 3.7. refers)

Tracey Slaven apologised for not progressing with the action but has recently raised this with HR and is currently awaiting a response. *In Train*

2.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING UPDATE (Minute 12.14 & 12.15 refers)

Allan Petrie informed that the previous completion rates will be produced in time for the re-launch of the 3 mandatory BeOnline modules. Kate Smith highlighted that she was not clear on what was being requested. HS&W to provide a clarification on what is expected and produce a matrix to highlight types of training to be included in returns. *Ongoing*

3 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING UPDATE

3.1 Allan Petrie reported that the external DSE Workstation Assessor courses were progressing with 36 individuals trained this week and 2 additional courses would run on the 15th & 16th February. Some spaces are still available if volunteers can be found.

3.2 There was a brief discussion on when the Be-Online would be re-issued and the Committee agreed that the relaunch date would be 1st March 2022.

4 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY REVIEW PROGRAM

4.1 Garry Fisher reported that progress with the review program had not gone as planned due to staffing issues and Covid. He highlighted that within the Appendix are outstanding policies with risk ratings and invited the Committee members to comment on these ratings and whether there were policies missing.

4.2 Eddie Stephen commented that having guidance to accompany policies would be beneficial to prevent Schools having to develop their own differing guidance. Tracey Slaven agreed but emphasised the importance of not combining policy and guidance documents. Ian McEwan questioned that regarding the Overseas Travel Policy, there had been Covid guidance issues and asked if the University would revert to the previous policy. Tracey Slaven felt that the Covid guidance was, like emergency legislation, interim and guidance only although any updated policy would require to be more robust learning from the Covid experience.

- 4.3 Laura Benvie highlighted that some staff have difficulties accessing policies, especially the Health and Safety Policy due to accessibility concerns. Tracey Slaven requested that this should be taken away and thought about

Action: Laura Benvie/Garry Fisher

- 4.4 Robert Philp questioned what the main priority within the high priority policies was. It was considered that the risk assessment policy was highest. Tracey Slaven requested that Committee members give consideration to the prioritisation

Action: All

- 4.5 Garry Fisher highlighted that if other areas had policies or guidance documents that could benefit others then could they share them with HS&W. It was agreed that a Teams site should be set up to facilitate this.

Action: Garry Fisher

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSULTATION POLICY

- 5.1 Garry Fisher explained that the Health and Safety Consultation Policy had gone to PNCC in parallel with PNCC after the Policy Review Group had highlighted that the Trade Unions would represent any staff member. PNCC had requested, the previous day, that Section 6 be amended to explicitly state that the formation of a Health and Safety Committee would be agreed in consultation with the Trade Unions.

- 5.2 The Committee agreed to endorse the Policy, with that amendment, and that it should be progressed to PaRC for final approval.

6 OUT OF HOURS RUNNING OF EQUIPMENT PERMIT

- 6.1 Eddie Stephen gave an overview of issues, particularly data protection ones, in relation to the current process in Engineering for displaying out of hours running equipment permits. Engineering have now implemented a system where there is a secure box containing personal information relating to the equipment that Security have access to. There is also a Teams site containing similar information.

- 6.2 Martin Cowie highlighted that they have done something similar in Biological Sciences, but it would be beneficial to adopt the same, or similar, system. Rainer Ebel stated that in Chemistry there is a system where individuals who have not been trained to access labs cannot do so. It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged to understand the framing and review and would likely require input from Security.

Action: Garry Fisher

7 COVID UPDATE

- 7.1 Tracey Slaven gave an update on the current Covid situation. It was highlighted that the Scottish Government is advising a phased approach to return to working on campus and it was recognised that there had been some staff who had always worked on campus. Expected that the Scottish Government will be soon releasing a new strategic framework to 'live with the virus'. The Scottish Government is considering legislation around emergency powers if required for future variants.

- 7.2 It is expected that if Omicron remains the dominant variant, then there will be waves of infections but with vaccinations and boosters, health impacts will not be significant. The earlier travel requirements for self-isolation and testing of arrivals have been removed for fully vaccinated individuals but some destinations still have restrictions for arrivals. The case numbers in NHS Grampian are remaining relatively stable.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE (2021-22)

- 8.1 Garry Fisher highlighted that the plan was dated 31st December and largely up to date and most items were on track. Tracey Slaven requested that Garry Fisher confirm dates for the workload related tasks with the Senior Vice Principal to replace 'TBC' before the next meeting.

Action: Garry Fisher

9 WELLBEING STRATEGY ANNUAL ACTION PLAN (2021-22)

- 9.1 Karen Scaife outlined the action plan and informed the Committee that they were confident that the plan will be achieved. Laura Benvie raised the "My Possible Self" app which was available on the University website and, although good, raised some concerns about certain aspects of it. Karen Scaife to investigate further.

Action: Karen Scaife

- 9.2 It was identified that there are some areas across the University where there are no, or very few, Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA), that males and those who work out with normal 'core hours' were under-represented. The committee members were asked to encourage volunteers from E&F, MMS&N, Biological Sciences, Business School, DISS, Law and Natural and Computing Sciences.

Action: All

10 FIRE SAFETY REPORT

- 10.1 Garry Fisher informed the Committee that all audit reports had been received from Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) following the audits of the Hillhead Halls. The University will respond to SFRS with a letter and this will be distributed with the draft minutes of the Committee.

Action: Garry Fisher

- 10.2 Mr Fisher highlighted that there will be a change in response by the SFRS from April 2023 in how they respond to automatic fire alarms, and he will produce a paper outlining the impact of this on the University for a future meeting.

Action: Garry Fisher

- 10.3 It was questioned when it would be expected that fire evacuation arrangements in University buildings can revert back to pre-Covid arrangements. Garry Fisher agreed to take a paper to CPG to cover the expectation that fire evacuation arrangements can return to 'normal'.

Action: Garry Fisher

11 ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES UPDATE

- 11.1 Allan Petrie outlined the accident and near misses for the last quarter of 2021. One incident of note was the extraction of a staff member from a stuck lift where the correct procedure was not followed. Again, a lower number of accidents than the same period in 2019 is considered to be a result of fewer people on campus.

12 REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

- 12.1 Allan Petrie informed the Committee that all Sub-Committees had met since the last University Health and Safety Committee. There were 3 GMO and 1 wild type applications at the Old Aberdeen Biosafety Committee, and all were approved. At the Foresterhill Biosafety Committee, 6 GMO applications were reviewed, 1 required further clarification prior to approval and 1 will require notification to the HSE.

12.2 At the last Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee, the University Radiation Protection Adviser provided an update on recent activities including the audit schedule, reduction in use of open sources, an increase in the use of lasers, etc. It was highlighted that a High Activity Sealed Source that was due for disposal is scheduled to be uplifted from the University in February and recycled.

13 AOCB

13.1 No AOCB was raised

14. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

14.1 The Schedule of the Committee meetings for this session has been identified - 4th May 2022, 3rd August 2022 and 1st November 2022.