



Health and Safety Committee

Covid-19 Meeting

9 October 2020, 3.00pm

Minutes

Present Members:

Ms Fiona Ryland (Convenor)

Dr Matthew Blain, Executive Director of Human Resources

Miss Hayley Boakes

Ms Sandra Bond

Ms Theo Bryer

Ms Sonia Buckingham

Mr Colin Byelong

Dr Alun Coker

Miss Yasmeen Daoud

Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab

Mr Keith Harvey

Mr David Ladd

Dr Matt Lougher

Ms Carol Paige

Ms Hayley Ramsay, Deputy Head of Safety

Mrs Eira Rawlings

Mr Paul Stirk, Head of Safety

Ms Joanne Tapper

Attendees:

Mr Simon Cooke

Mr Ian Dancy

Mr Richard Jackson

Ms Sian Minett

Mr Duncan Palmer

9 October 2020

Prof Irene Petersen

Apologies:

Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health

Ms Tansy Jones

Mr Brian Kavanagh

Part I: Preliminary Business

1 Minutes

- 1.1 The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2020 with this addition at 116.9: the Trade Unions requested that UCL develop a test strategy among students living in halls of residence which includes both individuals who are symptomatic as well as asymptomatic.

2 Matters Arising (Paper 1-01)

- 2.1 Arising from minute 103.8, brief Heads of Department on the revised guidance on use of PPE equipment at the next leadership forum. The Head of Safety stated that the action should have been corrected to 'brief Heads of Department on non-compliance with the DSE self-assessment tool' and that he had presented that briefing at the Leadership Team meeting on 7 October.
- 2.2 Arising from minute 103.2, consider the request for a management representative from the Institute of Education to join the Committee in relation to the terms of reference. The Convenor had taken advice and decided that membership would not be appropriate.
- 2.3 Arising from minute 103.3, engage with the HR Employment Policy Team to produce a support and policy framework for people who are experiencing long-term illness having contracted Covid-19, to be made available on the HR website. The guidance had been published.
- 2.4 Arising from minute 115.2, provide guidance perhaps in the form of a video for staff who commute on how to improve the fit of face coverings. It was reported that there a video was available on how to fit PPE rather than face coverings, as the latter do not have a seal.

9 October 2020

- 2.5 Arising from minute 116.3, explore a matrix to provide a 'general risk indicator' of a person's exposure to Covid-19, taking into account such things as commute, role type, interactions. The draft version would be published once the content was agreed with the Director of Workplace Health.
- 2.6 Arising from minute 108.2, investigate a self-referral process for the individual risk assessment tool and explore again the issue of whether the highlighted age for an increased risk from coronavirus should be 50 or 70. This had been escalated to a specialist practitioner in Workplace Health and the reference to age would be updated to 50 by 12 October.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

3 Covid 19: UCL status update

- 3.1 The density of people on campus was of course considerably lower than normal at this time of year. The testing programme for students and staff was in progress.

4 Fire drills in student accommodation / academic buildings (Paper 1-02)

- 4.1 Mr Simon Cooke presented a paper on undertaking fire drills in both student accommodation and academic buildings.
- 4.2 It was agreed that if a student accommodation building had not had a naturally occurring fire evacuation alarm within one month, a fire evacuation drill would be scheduled. Academic buildings would continue to have annual drills.

5 Fire Safety Policy and Standard (Paper 1-03)

- 5.1 Mr Simon Cooke presented the new fire safety policy and standard, informed by an external audit of UCL's fire safety management system, which was undertaken as a result of the government's request that all Higher Education institutions review and report back on buildings across their academic and residential estates and confirm compliance with fire safety building regulations.
- 5.2 Concerns were raised that the fire safety team was too small, particularly if members were required to self-isolate due to Covid-19.

9 October 2020

- 5.3 The fire safety policy and standard were approved with the feedback from this Committee to be being included in the submission of the documents to the Provost and Senior Management Team.

6 Status update of DSE assessment compliance (Paper 1-04)

- 6.1 The Head of Safety presented the update. The charts showed very little movement from those previously reported.
- 6.2 It was agreed that the programme would continue to be monitored at this committee.

7 Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (Paper 1-05)

- 7.1 It was requested that UCL urgently instigate weekly pool testing of all students and staff who are on site, prioritising those living in halls of residence, those on school placements and those who have a high number of individual contacts by the nature of their job.
- 7.2 It was agreed that the request would be raised at that day's meeting of the Daily Review Group, which includes members of the Public Health Advisory Panel (PHAP).
- 7.3 An update would be provided by the Convenor as soon as possible after the meeting.
- 7.4 The remaining items for discussion would be addressed in a written response from the convenor following the meeting, due to time restrictions. Future meetings would last 90 minutes.

8 Any other business

The meeting finished at 4.05 pm

Jon Blackman

September 2020



Health and Safety Committee

Covid-19 Meeting

9 October 2020

Written response from the Convenor to agenda item 7

Introduction

At the Friday 9 October Health & Safety Committee the Chief Operating Officer agreed to provide a written response to the final agenda item, which included the following requests:

1. UCL urgently instigating weekly pool testing of all students and staff who are on site; prioritising those:
 - a. living in halls of residence
 - b. those on school placements
 - c. those who have a high number of individual contacts by the nature of their job.
2. Compliance with Institutional Risk Assessment RA035341/4 - Maintaining 25% normal occupancy.
3. Developing a more effective system of monitoring the implementation of the Covid related H&S arrangements.
4. Responding promptly to staff concerns that are specific to different areas, buildings and activities across the UCL estate.
5. Reinstatement of the 15 student-cap on numbers in all face-to-face teaching.

Item 1 was discussed at the meeting and it was agreed that Richard Jackson would raise the request with the Daily Review Group, which includes members of the Public Health Advisory Panel (PHAP). The response is below.

9 October 2020

The Health & Safety Committee-approved institutional risk assessment (RA035341/4) can be found at https://www.ucl.ac.uk/safety-services/sites/safety-services/files/ra035341_version_4.pdf

Weekly Pool Testing

UCL has put in place a symptomatic testing regime. These tests have been offered to:

- Staff who need to work on campus
- Students who are living in Halls

The testing regime which was originally piloted in Paul O’Gorman building, has been in place since August.

It is supported by HSL, the diagnostic lab partner to UCLH and Royal Free Hospital, which links the UCL testing regime to the NHS Test and Trace system.

Following the steady increase in the number of infected individuals, we have been reviewing our testing approach. In particular, being able to undertake some asymptomatic testing.

It is proposed that we trial asymptomatic testing on a pilot basis in selected Halls of Residence to determine whether that will help prevent further infections.

We will use information from this to inform our ongoing testing strategy. This strategy will also need to address the logistical implications of testing. These include: case management, contact tracing and support arrangements for staff and students.

With regard to pooled testing, we are not proposing to take this forward at this point. We’re seeing a high yield of positive cases from our current strategy. It is our view that pooled testing tends to be most effective when viral prevalence is at relatively low levels in a population.

Space capacity

The above risk assessment states that wherever possible we must maintain a 2 metre (6’6) distance between people.

9 October 2020

Estates and the Timetabling Team have followed Government and HSE advice at all times, putting the safety of staff and students first. UCL could have opted (like some other HE institutions) to use a 1m+ approach for room capacity. There are a number of policies and concepts in operation which may be causing some confusion:

1. The 1 in 4 rule – designed as a rule of thumb to reduce total density on campus. The departments consider how to manage this against local risk assessments.
2. 25% capacity for informal gatherings – again a rule of thumb to support social distancing.
3. Teaching spaces, meeting rooms, kitchens – a very robust process (outlined in appendix 1) has been followed to lay rooms out to meet our social distancing rule of 2m. In addition Estates have completed a ventilation survey in all these spaces. So the layout and room capacity is based on much more specific data than the broad 1 in 4 rule. The 2m social distancing measure is taken from nose to nose (not, for example, 2m from the edge of a desk to the next desk).

We will review our communication so that it is clear what applies in each situation.

It is important to note that the primary government recommendation is to ensure 2 metres distancing and so long as this can be achieved, the 25% (1 in 4) figure is an indicative limit rather than an absolute limit and should be considered as such. This is also made clear within the general return to UCL risk assessment template.

St Martins Le Grand has been identified as a specific case within the paper. With this specific building, extensive consideration was given to the arrangements in place. Due to larger desks than in other offices and wider rows between desks, 2 metre social distancing has been maintained in the current arrangement and therefore Government guidance is still being met, although the 25% (1 in 4) indicative limit has not been implemented.

There is a variation in the % capacity reduction across teaching rooms which is entirely to be expected given the different layouts and types of different rooms. This is further complicated by the fact that the same room may have different capacities

9 October 2020

depending on the layout. The Elvin Hall in the IoE, for example, has 'normal' capacities of 150, 100 or 80 depending on layout, giving a revised percentage occupancy of between 56 and 30%. Moreover, because normal occupancy is dependent on a range of factors, there are marked differences in the original room capacity. For example at the IoE room layouts were initially already relatively low capacity compared to a fixed seat lecture theatre which tend to be much higher density. Therefore it is considered safe for some teaching rooms to have an occupancy of more than 25% of its original capacity.

The Institute of Education was also raised as an area of concern by a member of the HSC. Since this feedback has been received the spaces have been reviewed by the timetabling team and appendices two to five include example photos of what the team found. We remain confident that the spaces meet the expectations set out above.

Post-implementation review and amendment

Notwithstanding the rigorous approach applied it is inevitable – with a supply of c.400 teaching rooms – that some room layouts work better than others.

To address this a further process of structured review of room capacities and layouts - whilst maintaining social distancing at 2m is underway to ensure that teaching rooms provide the most safe experience for students and staff alike.

This review will consider both:

- (i) the physical review of rooms and
- (ii) survey of staff (and students) of their experience of specific rooms.

It is intended that capacities will be revised on this basis. The physical review is underway and will be completed by Friday 16th October at the latest, and will be complemented by a survey of staff which was launched on Thursday 8th October.

In addition to this staff can raise concerns locally, with their Estates Area Facilities Managers, the Estates Helpdesk and the COVID-19 helpline. There are also the local Health & Safety committees which can discuss local issues.

9 October 2020

Implementation of COVID-19 H&S procedures

Throughout the period of reopening of UCL buildings, Safety Services has undertaken inspections to assess implementation of COVID-19 control measures, providing assurance that the controls implemented are suitable and being adhered to. To date, inspections have taken place in 58 buildings and 197 teaching & learning spaces.

Further inspections of this nature will be implemented by Safety Services later in October. The programme will sample all buildings, teaching / learning space and student residences. Each area will be sampled twice between the commencement of inspections and January 2021. This will provide assurance to the institution and departments that COVID-19 risk control measures are being adhered to, or identify deficiencies if they exist. Our general risk assessments will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis, to reflect the latest guidance, evidence, best practice and outcomes of the inspections.

Regarding availability of risk assessments; recording of risk assessments in riskNET was made mandatory at the end of 2019. This ensures they are easily accessible to staff for review and provide assurance of the controls in place to manage risk.

Library books

Regarding the specific concern about quarantine of library books – our understanding is that the change in policy was introduced to address a potential scenario, where books in high demand are needed sooner than 72 hours. The process of wiping the outside of books, instead of quarantining, would only be followed in these limited circumstances. Regarding paper as a vector, findings summarised at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/towers-lab/> reference a 3 hour time period for viability of SARS-CoV-2 on paper. Library Services will be contacted to ensure that at least a 3 hour period elapses before unprotected contact with paper in books that are part of this specific short turnaround procedure.

Reintroduce the 15 student cap in teaching spaces

9 October 2020

A maximum of 15 people was introduced as an immediate control for all rooms earlier in the year, to help manage the reopening of teaching spaces. It was a reasonable adjustment at the time. However, reflecting Government guidance and the risk control measures in place, the previous maximum was adjusted and each space evaluated individually to determine capacities, some of which are now above 15.

Providing that 2 metre distancing is implemented (as outlined above) along with other risk control measures for teaching spaces and the circulation spaces outside, a cap of 15 is not appropriate or deemed necessary. Some rooms are very large with a normal occupancy of over 100 people so going beyond 15 makes sense in these rooms.

Appendix 1 – Approach to assessing individual teaching room capacity

As a result of these factors when planning for a Covid-secure teaching environment the following approach was taken:

1. CAD team in Estates drew floor plans for the majority of teaching rooms at 2m social distancing (taken nose to nose). Based on the drawings, derived indicative revised capacities were calculated for the rest of the rooms.
2. A team of surveyors then undertook an initial room set up and/or marked up teaching rooms according to the CAD drawing at 2m social distancing.
3. There was then an iterative process of changing some room capacities (both up and down) with the Timetabling Team. This was on the basis of a range of factors including sight lines, furniture within the room, pillars etc.
4. Each teaching room was also subject to a ventilation survey. Every room in use for teaching this year - whether mechanically or naturally ventilated – has passed the test. The approach is set out in the following paper that supplements the ventilation advice given on the ventilation pages of the Coronavirus website:
[https://www.ucl.ac.uk/coronavirus/sites/coronavirus/files/coronavirus_risks -
_air_conditioning_and_ventilation_-_oct.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/coronavirus/sites/coronavirus/files/coronavirus_risks_-_air_conditioning_and_ventilation_-_oct.pdf)

9 October 2020

5. A specific risk assessment was completed for generic teaching spaces, supported by the issue of Guidance Notes for Teaching Staff.
6. We are also putting in place a Rapid Response Team to ensure that rooms are set up correctly (to an agreed plan) each morning (and to provide a number of other proactive and reactive services) to ensure that the socially distanced layout is in place each day.

In summary this approach:

- Covid-secure 2m social distancing layouts issued to Sodexo and portering teams (i) for display in each teaching room and (ii) for their future reference
- Nightly patrols and checks by Security to flag particular issues against a defined checklist
- Cleaners set up ahead of the start of the teaching day as per agreed 2m plan (and replenishment of sanitising materials etc.).