



**Health and Safety Committee**

Covid-19 Meeting

21 June 2021, 11.30am

Minutes

**Present Members:**

Ms Fiona Ryland, (Convenor)

Dr Matthew Blain, Executive Director of Human Resources

Miss Hayley Boakes

Ms Sandra Bond

Dr Theo Bryer

Mrs Sonia Buckingham

Mr Colin Byelong

Dr Alun Coker

Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab

Mr Keith Harvey

Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health

Dr Matt Lougher

Mrs Hayley Ramsay, Deputy Head of Safety

Dr Rob Wilson

**Attendees:**

Dr Carla Curado Milagre

Mr Ian Dancy

Prof Irene Petersen

Mrs Rebecca Whitham

**Apologies:**

Ms Victoria Adrienne

Mr David Ladd

Ms Carol Paige

Mrs Eira Rawlings

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Mr Paul Stirk, Director of Safety Services

Ms Joanne Tapper

## **Part I: Preliminary Business**

### **80 Minutes**

80.1 The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2021.

### **81 Matters Arising (Paper 10-51)**

81.1 Regarding minute 64.1: confirm how many Trade Union representatives would be included in the membership of each sub-committee of the HSC; it was agreed that each Trade Union would be invited to provide a representative for each sub-committee. The Trade Unions requested further information on how much time would need to be allocated to attending the five HSC sub-committees.

81.2 Regarding minute 75.1: provide an update on the joint Trade Unions and management working group on stress; more meetings were to be scheduled before the next Committee meeting.

81.3 Regarding minute 75.3: Extend an invitation to Denise Long or another member of Student Registry Services to join the HSC, as part of the move to have greater inclusion of Students Union concerns in the HSC agenda; the secretary would invite Denise Long to join the HSC.

81.4 Regarding minute 75.7: provide a response to the HSC on the issue of the failure of air conditioning and its possible implications for ventilation; Estates Division had responded that they needed to investigate and data gather on the systems installed across the university's laboratories, specifically how they interacted with each other in relation to activity undertaken in each laboratory. This would then enable laboratory managers in effective decision making and any alterations that may be required to operations and/or systems. Estates had committed to freeing up resource as soon as possible to lead the review, gathering stakeholders together to start to develop the scope of where they need to investigate the project, along with budget identification. This would be

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managed as a project to ensure effective management and control. Estates Division could provide regular updates to HSC.

- 81.5 It was agreed that a communication would be issued to make laboratory managers and Departmental Safety Officers aware of the line of responsibility for dealing with failures of ventilation and encourage people to use the Estates maintenance helpdesk to report such ventilation failures. The communication would be issued once the action plan for responding to the recent Health and Safety Executive inspection had been formalised, as that would address the matter of central oversight including powers of prohibition to close down laboratories.
- 81.6 Regarding minute 77.4: promote the requirement to report test results to Connect to Protect; the Executive Director of Operations had responded that UCL would continue to do all it could to ensure that staff and students were using Connect to Protect and that the process and communications were being reviewed to better publicise the importance of using Connect to Protect.
- 81.7 Some people had reported problems in using Connect to Protect, which were possibly browser-related; this would be investigated.
- 81.8 It was commented that the message of the importance of using the tool was diminished when it appeared as part of a wider-ranging communication. It was suggested that there could be a positive feature on the tool in 'The Week@UCL'; this would be taken to the Covid Management Response Team for approval.
- 81.9 Regarding minute 78.8: prepare a proposal to allow the HSC oversight of stress management and mental health in departments; the Director of Workplace Health reported that discussion was planned with the Trade Unions to determine their requirements. The plans would be aligned with the objectives of the joint Trade Unions and management working group on stress. An update would be provided at the next meeting.
- 81.10 Regarding minute 78.10: ensure that the language in UCL communications regarding lateral flow testing reflects the wording in government guidance, with 'strongly encouraged' and 'can' be tested being replaced with 'should'; it was reported that UCL communications and risk assessments had been updated with the changes.

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- 81.11 Regarding minute 79.7: Develop an action plan in riskNET so that progress on actions identified by the Health and Safety Executive can be easily tracked; the Deputy Head of Safety reported that this would be included in the action plan in response to the Health and Safety Executive inspection.
- 81.12 Regarding minute 79.8: consider a return to quarterly meetings following the June 2021 meeting; this would be decided at the July meeting.

## **Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion**

### **82 Covid-19 update**

- 82.1 The Convenor noted that the main change since the last meeting had been the delaying of step 4 of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown to 19 July, from 21 June. UCL had been the first university to offer vaccinations to students, ahead of the opening-up of vaccinations to the over-18s, and the university was hoping to become a vaccination centre.

### **83 UCL Covid-19 outbreak response**

- 83.1 The Director of Workplace Health reported that since the last meeting of HSC there had been one outbreak of two connected cases in a single flat in UCL student accommodation. There had also been four more positive cases in UCL student accommodation (plus a few more currently being processed), and eight unconnected positive results (for people on and off campus) reported to Connect to Protect.
- 83.2 It was agreed that the proposal of testing the occupants of a student accommodation residence where a case is identified would be put to the Covid Management Response Team for consideration. It was also agreed that the Camden and Islington Public Health team would be asked if PCR tests being taken by students who were isolating was a useful intervention. The NHS had opened its PCR testing offer to close-contacts without symptoms (although the message remains to continue self-isolating for 10 days, regardless of a negative result).

**84 UCL COVID-19 Testing Provision (Paper 9-52)**

84.1 Mrs Rebecca Whitham presented a paper on an anticipated change to NHS Test and Trace policy for universities from 19th July, and UCL's proposed response. While the Government had not yet issued formal communications to this effect, the information was shared with HSC members to ensure awareness of the proposed approach.

**85 Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (Paper 10-53)**

- 85.1 The Trade Unions asked what plans were in place to monitor the vaccination status of the student population. UCL's Public Health Advisory Panel (PHAP)'s approach was that vaccination would not be mandatory and vaccination status would not be requested of individuals, but the importance of vaccination would be emphasised in communications.
- 85.2 The advice of PHAP would be sought on the benefits of undertaking a pilot survey of vaccination status among a group of students.
- 85.3 The Trade Unions asked how staff and students were to be encouraged to undertake regular testing and stated that all staff and students attending campus should take a LFT twice a week with a drive to ensure as many people as possible take up testing, with posters displayed at strategic locations on campus.
- 85.4 It was reported that Communications and Marketing were preparing to produce posters and that there would be regular emails to encourage staff and students to be tested, with texts also to be considered.
- 85.5 The Trade Unions asked what was being done to ensure that every room used by students and staff is maximally ventilated, in advance of people returning to work. The importance of addressing the immediate health and safety risks of a failure of ventilation, while awaiting resolution of the problem, was emphasised. In response it was stated that all safety measures, including two metres social distancing, reduced room occupancy and the wearing of face-masks or coverings, should be considered in such situations.
- 85.6 Unhappiness was expressed at the response from Estates to a member's report of the failure of ventilation in a laboratory where the windows were

screwed shut, and there were other concerns about the safety of the particular laboratory.

- 85.7 The Executive Director of Operations agreed to investigate the response to the incident and requested that he be provided with a summary, including the Estates maintenance reference number. Caution was advised in altering window security fixtures as this could create a different health and safety risk.
- 85.8 The Convenor added that it should be established that the appropriate ventilation advice had been provided for the different types of space on campus. The communication agreed at minute 81.5 would provide people with information on how to report ventilation issues to the Estates maintenance helpdesk.
- 85.9 The Trade Unions asked if there were plans for the ongoing monitoring of compliance with Covid-19 risk assessments, and for waste-water monitoring of Covid-19. The Deputy Head of Safety reported that Covid-19 assurance monitoring would increase with the rise of numbers on campus. The Executive Director of Operations would provide a full response to the waste-water query at the next HSC meeting.

## **86 Health and Safety Executive inspection of UCL (Paper 10-54)**

- 86.1 The Deputy Head of Safety presented a report on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)'s inspection of Containment Level 3 (CL3) facilities and work with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) at UCL. It was noted that the action plan in response to the HSE's enforcement letter would include the question of central oversight, given the complex nature and organisational structure of UCL.
- 86.2 The Deputy Head of Safety or Director of Safety Services would present the action plan and update the Committee on any required actions until their completion.

## **87 Any other business**

- 87.1 The Trade Unions reported that one of their members had been told by their line manager not to report observed hazards on riskNET, but to their

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manager. Members were reminded that hazards should be reported on riskNET and to managers.

The meeting finished at 1.00 pm

Jon Blackman

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