



**Health and Safety Committee**

Covid-19 Meeting

24 September 2021, 11.00am

Minutes

**Present Members:**

Ms Fiona Ryland, (Convenor)

Ms Victoria Adrienne

Dr Matthew Blain, Chief People Officer

Ms Sandra Bond

Dr Theo Bryer

Mrs Sonia Buckingham

Mr Colin Byelong

Dr Alun Coker

Ms Yasmeen Daoud

Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab

Ms Denise Long

Dr Matt Lougher

Mrs Hayley Ramsay, Deputy Head of Safety

Mrs Eira Rawlings

Dr Rob Wilson

**Attendees:**

Dr Bill Andrews

Mr Michael Jorge

Mr Richard Lukos

Mr Stephen Moore

Mr Mike Sheppard

Ms Karen Smith

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**Apologies:**

Miss Hayley Boakes

Mr Keith Harvey

Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health

Mr Paul Stirk, Director of Safety Services

Ms Joanne Tapper

Mr Osman Teklies

**Part I: Preliminary Business**

**108 Minutes**

108.1 The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2021.

**109 Matters Arising (Paper 13-67)**

109.1 Regarding minute 99.2: Provide an update at the next meeting on the proposal for a positive feature on Connect to Protect to be included in 'The Week@UCL'; it was reported that an item had appeared in Coronavirus update: issue 150 on 14 September and that a video had been sent to staff and students and would be reissued.

109.2 Regarding minute 99.3: Provide an update on the HSC's oversight of stress management and mental health in departments; a stress risk assessment was being produced.

109.3 Regarding minute 99.5: Request the advice of PHAP on the benefits of undertaking a pilot survey of vaccination status among a group of students; the PHAP had responded that there would not be any benefit in undertaking the survey.

109.4 Regarding minutes 99.11 and 99.12, the Trade Unions requested that the communications that were issued to DSOs on asbestos awareness in buildings and on the importance of reporting problems with the repair of buildings to Estates Maintenance, be sent to all staff. The Deputy Head of Safety agreed to arrange that.

109.5 Regarding minute 103.2: Provide an estimate of how much coverage would be provided by CO<sub>2</sub> monitors in the estate and the timescale for installation;

Estates Division were not able to provide details of the extent of coverage as they were surveying and installing as they completed each phase of installation. Phase 1, covering the Institute of Education would be completed by 11 November and phase 2, covering 11 more buildings was estimated to be completed at about the same time, subject to confirmation.

- 109.6 Regarding minute 105.1: Provide a description of the alarm/notification system for ventilation failures for circulation to Committee members and review the protocols for communicating failures to departments occupying affected buildings; a response had been provided detailing the various ways works could be notified to Estates. The Trade Unions requested more information on service standards and timescales, and this would be discussed with Estates.

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

### **110 Containment Level 3 Laboratory Inspections (Paper 13-68)**

- 110.1 Mr Richard Lukos presented a paper proposing a standard methodology for routine inspections of Containment Level 3 (CL3) laboratories by departments, in order to comply with the Health and Safety Executive's action arising from their inspection of the CL3 laboratories across UCL.
- 110.2 The Committee approved the inspection template for use by departments for inspections of CL3 laboratories and the proposal that inspections be carried out monthly for all CL3 laboratories.

### **111 Standard: risk assessments for work with biological agents and plants (Paper 13-69)**

- 111.1 Mr Stephen Moore presented a standard for setting out a framework for the preparation and approval of risk assessments for work with biological agents and plants.
- 111.2 The Committee approved the standard.

### **112 Containment Level 3 Standard for Emergency Response (Paper 13-70)**

- 112.1 Mr Stephen Moore presented a standard proposing a framework to improve the management of activities, maintenance and emergency procedures in UCL's CL3 facilities.

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112.2 The standard was approved by the Committee.

**113 Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (Paper 13-71)**

113.1 The Trade Unions stated that moves to mandate presenteeism with a blanket 40% attendance requirement were unwelcome, unwarranted and counterproductive, and they had reservations that some managers would insist on staff attending the workplace two days a week. The Chief People Officer emphasised that the attendance requirement was a pilot measure subject to changes in government policy and was due to be reviewed in the spring term. Any instances of management inflexibility as to how the 40% requirement was followed should be referred to the Head of Department or the Trade Unions.

113.2 The Trade Unions requested that signage be provided for rooms showing the current maximum occupancy, along with guidance on how the room is best ventilated and guidance on use of fan-cool ventilation. It was also felt that more communication and guidance was required for teaching staff as to their responsibilities when using rooms. The Convenor responded that general guidance on the use of rooms would be issued and the question of displaying room occupancy would be investigated further.

113.3 The Trade Unions asked that a room level audit of ventilation be conducted to ensure that ventilation rates in all rooms are maintained at 12-17 litres per second per person and requested the development of a suitable and sufficient system to alert staff of ventilation failures.

113.4 It was agreed that a flow chart of the response to ventilation failures would be provided to the Trade Unions and a programme of inspection of the ventilation rates in all rooms would be instigated.

113.5 The Trade Unions were concerned that the Covid-19 individual health assessment tool did not adequately assess the risk of psychological damage to staff who are fearful of Covid-19. Traumatized staff were fearful of returning to work or engaging fully in public life. The Chief People Officer agreed to arrange for a review of individual health assessment tool particularly with regard to mental health.

113.6 The Trade Unions requested that the messaging on face coverings be improved with a prominent new campaign; clear procedures to support staff

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who were unwilling to continue face-to-face teaching in classes where students refused to wear masks; and that the use of visors be risk assessed.

113.7 The Chief People Officer stated that the appropriate information on face-coverings had been sent to staff for some weeks but there was no specific guidance for those teaching students who did not wear masks. New guidance including the safety measures to observe and the message that visors were not acceptable face coverings would be issued in early October.

#### **114 Update on HSE inspection enforcement actions (Paper 13-72)**

114.1 The Deputy Head of Safety Services presented a paper providing a status update on the HSE enforcement actions and the response action plan.

#### **115 Any other business**

115.1 UCL's Senior Management Team (SMT) had agreed that the HSC - as the Work Health & Safety Committee (WHSC) - would be a sub-committee of the new UMC (University Management Committee) from 1 October. The new terms of reference and membership would be presented at the first meeting of 2021-22 and the chairs of WHSC's sub-committees would join the membership.

115.2 The Trade Unions expressed concern that an 'in-person' ISD termly increment planning event involving over 60 people was due to be held on 13-14 October.

The meeting finished at 12.20 pm

Jon Blackman

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