



Health and Safety Committee

Covid-19 Meeting

28 May 2021, 2.00pm

Minutes

Present Members:

Dr Matthew Blain, Executive Director of Human Resources

Ms Sandra Bond

Mrs Sonia Buckingham

Dr Alun Coker

Miss Yasmeen Daoud

Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab

Mr Keith Harvey

Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health

Mr David Ladd

Dr Matt Lougher

Ms Carol Paige

Mrs Hayley Ramsay, Deputy Head of Safety

Mrs Eira Rawlings

Mr Paul Stirk, Director of Safety Services

Ms Joanne Tapper

Dr Rob Wilson

Attendees:

Dr Bill Andrews

Dr Carla Curado Milagre

Mr Ian Dancy

Mr David Everett

Mr Michael Jorge

Ms Tracy Pearmain

Mr David Stevens

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Apologies:

Ms Fiona Ryland, (Convenor)

Ms Victoria Adrienne

Miss Hayley Boakes

Dr Theo Bryer

Part I: Preliminary Business

74 Minutes

74.1 The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2021.

75 Matters Arising (Paper 9-49)

75.1 Regarding minute 29.1: Provide an update on the joint Trade Unions and management working group on stress; the convenor had been contacted about an opportunity to discuss the purpose and expectations of the group, in order to create terms of reference which will need be agreed by all members of the working group.

75.2 Regarding minute 61.5: take the proposal that the chair of each HSC sub-committee should become a member of the HSC to the Senior Management Team (SMT) for approval; the SMT had confirmed the proposed sub-committee types and agreed that the chairs of the sub-committees would be a senior member of management where that was not already the case.

75.3 Regarding minute 61.6: produce a proposal for greater inclusion of Students Union concerns in the HSC agenda, or for a separate meeting process; an invitation would be extended to Denise Long or another member of Student Registry Services to join the HSC.

75.4 Regarding minute 67.1: encourage people to be tested twice a week in the communications regarding the return to work; communications had been issued to the UCL community encouraging people to be tested twice a week. See also minute 78.7.

75.5 Regarding minute 68.3: produce a formal response to the Trade Unions' suggested control measures to be used to mitigate the risk of COVID outbreaks as UCL moves to a higher occupancy level; an email response had

been provided on 17 May and was reiterated in the response to the Trade Unions' items at Minute 78 below.

- 75.6 Regarding minute 70.2: review the arrangement agreed in October 2020 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; an email update would be circulated to Committee members.
- 75.7 Regarding minute 70.3: provide Estates Division with the details of a local incident involving failure of air conditioning and its possible implications for ventilation, for further investigation and response; it was acknowledged that this is part of a wider issue and Estates Division would provide a full response in the next month.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

76 Covid-19 update

- 76.1 The Executive Director of Human Resources provided an update on the staff communications that have been issued regarding the planned return to campus on 21 June 2021. Managers had received guidance on supporting those people who may be experiencing nervousness or mental health issues about returning to campus. Approximately 2,500 staff had attended Roadshows where specific questions were addressed.

77 UCL Covid-19 outbreak response

- 77.1 The Director of Workplace Health reported that there had been no outbreaks since the last meeting and only one positive case, which affected a student, had been reported in the last two weeks.
- 77.2 Workplace Health has been working with Communications and Marketing to create communications so that UCL is ready if it is required to conduct 'surge' testing.
- 77.3 Connect to Protect reporting remains very low with only 20% of people tested reporting their results, regardless of whether the test was conducted at UCL or at home. This means that university does not have clear visibility of the level of testing taking place across the UCL community. Reporting of results is encouraged in various communications such as leaflets handed out at the

test, posters displayed throughout the testing centre and text messages and emails issued following the test.

- 77.4 It was agreed that all communication channels should promote the requirement to report test results to Connect to Protect. The Trade Unions would also promote the Connect to Protect.

78 Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (Paper 9-50)

- 78.1 The Trade Unions argued that all UCL spaces should follow the workspace regulations (11 cubic metres of working space per worker, except in teaching space). The Executive Director of Operations stated that UCL was following the requirement for appropriate workspace where the Estates Division had control but acknowledged that local decisions could include adding additional desks without Estates being informed.
- 78.2 Departmental managers would be reminded in return-to-work communications not to alter the plans for ensuring correct workspace and ventilation arrangements.
- 78.3 The Trade Unions requested that room occupancy numbers and ventilation information be affixed to all room doors, so that users are aware of the number of persons permitted per room, the type of ventilation provided (natural or mechanical), and whether the mechanical ventilation needed to be switched on.
- 78.4 It was reported that this activity would be labour intensive and difficult to organise centrally and could lead to inappropriate conclusions being drawn by room users. The subject would be revisited once government guidance was updated.
- 78.5 The Trade Unions requested that carbon dioxide monitors be provided to their health and safety representatives for use on campus.
- 78.6 Estates Division would undertake any measuring of ventilation in spaces to ensure that the appropriate expertise and equipment is used. Specific concerns, raised under a maintenance work order, would be investigated by Estates Division.
- 78.7 The Trade Unions stated that the HSC had no oversight of departmental plans relating to stress management standards.

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- 78.8 It was agreed that the Director of Workplace Health would work with the Trade Unions to prepare a proposal to allow the Committee oversight of stress management and mental health in departments.
- 78.9 The Trade Unions felt that UCL's guidance to students regarding lateral flow testing was not strong enough and requested that the wording be changed from "strongly encouraged" and "can" get tested to "should" get tested.
- 78.10 The request would be reviewed with Communications and Marketing to ensure that the use of language is appropriate and in line with government guidance. The relevant UCL risk assessments' wording would also be updated to reflect this.
- 78.11 The Trade Unions suggested a communications campaign to encourage students and younger members of staff to get vaccinated.
- 78.12 In response it was stated that UCL supported the vaccine programme and strongly encouraged everybody to get vaccinated. Student Support and Wellbeing were considering how to link vaccines to the UCL induction and GP practices. A paper had been submitted to the Russell Group who were lobbying the Government to provide universities with the flexibility to deliver vaccines to returning students themselves. UCL did not intend to make vaccination compulsory.
- 78.13 The Students Union supported strengthening the vaccination message but noted that communications needed to recognise that students from countries where the vaccine rollout is not as advanced as it is in the UK can still return to campus.

79 Any other business

79.1 Workplace Health recommendations

- 79.2 The Trade Unions requested clarity on how recommendations made by Workplace Health are implemented and how stress risk assessments are followed up. The Trade Unions added that when a staff member returned from a period of illness due to stress, a manager should conduct a specialist assessment, but this often does not happen.
- 79.3 In response it was stated that Workplace Health was an advisory function and managing these recommendations would remove the responsibility from

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managers. HR Business Partnering are copied into the Workplace Health assessment reports to support managers in reviewing complex cases.

Employees should follow the documented complaint procedures if recommendations are not being implemented or if they are unhappy with them. Workplace Health do not follow up stress reports but do record the number received and report this to the Senior Management Team.

79.4 Safety Services is working with Workplace Health to map a process to enable stress risk assessments to be entered in riskNET, allowing them to be easily recorded and managed. It was felt that this would put pressure on departmental heads to ensure the correct procedure was followed.

79.5 **HSE inspection**

79.6 The Director of Safety Services provided a verbal update on the outcome of the recent inspection by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). A full report would be provided at the next meeting. An action plan would be developed in riskNET so that progress on actions identified by the HSE can be easily tracked.

79.7 **Frequency of meetings**

79.8 The Committee agreed to consider a return to quarterly meetings following the June 2021 meeting.

The meeting finished at 3.30 pm

Tracy Samson

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