



**Work Health and Safety Committee**

31 March 2022, 11.30am

Minutes

**Present Members:**

Ms Fiona Ryland, Convenor

Professor Erik Arstad, Chair, Radiation Safety Sub-Committee

Dr Matthew Blain, Chief People Officer

Ms Sandra Bond

Dr Theo Bryer

Mr Colin Byelong

Mr Ian Dancy, Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee

Miss Yasmin Daoud

Mrs Joanne English

Mr Simon Galloway

Mr Keith Harvey

Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health

Mr Damian Johnson

Mr David Ladd

Ms Denise Long

Dr Matt Lougher

Professor Ivan Parkin, Chair, Chemical Safety Sub-Committee

Ms Tracy Pearmain

Mrs Hayley Ramsay, Head of Safety Governance and Risk

Mrs Eira Rawlings

Mr Mike Sheppard, Chair, Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee

Ms Joanne Tapper

Dr Rob Wilson

31 March 2022

**Attendees:**

Dr Bill Andrews

Ms Sally Belcher

Mr Simon Cooke

Miss Donna Dalrymple

Ms Rachel Fairfax

Ms Irida Gaikwad

Mr Duncan Kennedy

Mr Danny Patel

Ms Laura Tomson

**Apologies:**

Miss Hayley Boakes

Mrs Sonia Buckingham

Dr Rebecca Caygill

Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab

Mr Paul Stirk, Director of Safety Services

Mr Osman Teklies

**Part I: Preliminary Business**

**52 Membership**

52.1 The Unison safety representative Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab had swapped roles with the observer Mrs Joanne English.

**53 Minutes**

53.1 The Work Health and Safety Committee (WHSC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2022.

**54 Matters Arising (Paper 6-30)**

54.1 Regarding minute 43.1: provide a verbal update on any new changes made to the Covid-19 risk assessments. The risk assessments had been reviewed and minor changes made to ensure alignment with government guidance on Covid-19.

31 March 2022

- 54.2 Regarding minute 45.2: in light of the culture change in staff sickness absence encouraging staff to stay at home if feeling unwell, bring the results of the review of absence processes to a future meeting. See minute 57 below.
- 54.3 Regarding minute 45.2: bring a summary of Covid-19 absence (including period of absence) since the onset of tracking to the next meeting. See minute 55 below.
- 54.4 Regarding minute 47.3: pursue the issue of air handling units being shut down by engineers during fire alarm tests with the Estates Area Facilities Manager and provide an update at the next meeting. The Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee had responded that this was a historical issue which would be addressed by the improvement works being undertaken by Estates Division on Containment Level 3 (CL3) laboratories, which would identify CL3 managers and require them to approve any maintenance activities before they are carried out. All air handling units should be clearly labelled to ensure that they were not turned off inadvertently.
- 54.5 Regarding minute 47.3: liaise with the fire safety team so that they can review any fire alarms interfacing with local CL3 arrangements. Ms Rachel Fairfax had responded that the operation and maintenance (O&M) manuals were under review by Safety Services and Fire Safety to determine if all relevant fire safety information and considerations were included.
- 54.6 Regarding minute 47.4: follow up whether a permit to work is required for safety-controlling processes such as fumigating a cabinet, as there is no guidance to refer to from Estates Division. The Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee had responded that a project had started to review the permit to work system, which would address this matter.
- 54.7 Regarding minute 48.2: provide information on a standardised treatment to mitigate the risk of infection by antibiotic-resistant bacteria to students involved in dissection programmes, considering the potential for antibiotic resistance. Ms Rachel Fairfax had responded that work on this was under way and an update would be provided in May.
- 54.8 Regarding minute 49.4: pursue with Security the issue of fire exits being locked shut to deter homeless people from entering buildings. Mr Simon Cooke had responded that all relevant gates would be left unlocked whilst Access Systems and the Fire Safety team survey gates across the campus to

review whether they are required for escape, their condition, security arrangements and possible security solutions.

- 54.9 Regarding minute 49.4: investigate providing laminated floor plans for high-risk buildings. Mr Simon Cooke had responded that the Fire Safety Team were willing to provide A1 paper plans in Premises Information Boxes (PIB) for a small number of high-risk buildings identified by the Chair, Chemical Safety sub-committee but anything more would require significant resources as the small fire team were extremely stretched. It was agreed that proposals for the plans would be discussed at the next Fire Safety Sub-Committee and brought back to the subsequent WHSC meeting.
- 54.10 Regarding minute 49.5: provide the Convenor with a communication for the attention of Deans on the importance of having sufficient departmental fire evacuation marshals to maintain fire safety in buildings used by students. Mr Simon Cooke had responded that the communication had been provided.
- 54.11 Regarding minute 49.6: Investigate purchasing system issues delaying the resolution of a request to repair damaged fire doors in the LCN building. The Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee had responded that Procurement had been made aware of the purchasing issue. Estates Division were considering the wider issue of a large backlog of fire strips needing to be replaced, as part of the compartmentation works programme.
- 54.12 Regarding minute 50.4: ask the Director (Estates Development) to consider the Trade Unions' request for a commitment to maintaining a staff canteen at the Institute of Education. The Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee had responded that the Estates Development team had formally acknowledged the request.
- 54.13 Regarding minute 50.5: include the importance of staff rest and eating areas in the Estates masterplan and bring to the Committee for review. The Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee had responded that the Estates masterplan would not initially focus on such detail but would in time provide a vision for improving the campus, including staff and student areas. When appropriate the plan would be discussed with the WHSC, focussing on the wellbeing of staff.

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

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

55.1 The Director of Workplace Health reported that there were four ongoing outbreaks in student accommodation. Since the last meeting there had been 9 outbreaks, all except one in student accommodation. With regard to the request made at the last meeting for a summary of Covid-19 absence (including period of absence) since the onset of tracking, this would be addressed at the next meeting as it required further analysis.

### **56 Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) (Paper 4-24)**

56.1 The Chair, Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee presented a paper providing an update on the servicing of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) on the UCL estate. The paper had been postponed from earlier meetings.

56.2 It was agreed that there would be information displayed by AEDs stating how staff should report faults or damage to the devices.

56.3 It was agreed that the Estates Customer Helpdesk staff would be made aware of a procedure for dealing with requests to install an AED at a new location and one of the devices would be installed near the Pears Building.

56.4 It was established that Safety Services were responsible for AED policy, with Estates Division providing the asset register and maintenance and producing a new central register and location map of AEDs.

### **57 Review of COVID-related absence policies (Paper 6-31)**

57.1 Ms Laura Tomson presented a paper detailing a review of current Human Resources COVID-19 policies in line with the Government's removal of COVID measures which proposed the removal of UCL's COVID-19 policies for absence and a return to normal, including ceasing the requirement for routine testing before attending our buildings. The paper also proposed a campaign to encourage staff and students to stay at home if unwell. Mask wearing would become voluntary.

57.2 The Committee approved the paper's recommendations.

57.3 It was agreed that University Management Committee (UMC) would be asked to decide whether to defer for three to six months the recommendation that those whose immune systems mean that they are at higher risk be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**58 Campus infrastructure and maintenance compliance audit report (Paper 6-32)**

- 58.1 The Chair, Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee presented a paper providing a summary of the findings of a compliance baseline audit of Estates infrastructure and maintenance that was completed in February. A list of actions already set in motion and an executive summary of the main action plan were also provided.
- 58.2 The Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee would provide further updates in reports to the WHSC.

**59 Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (Paper 6-33)**

- 59.1 The Trade Unions asked that with the withdrawal of COVID-19 special paid leave, there should be an increase in the threshold for triggering sickness absence measures, especially as presenteeism was now being discouraged.
- 59.2 The Chief People Officer agreed to monitor absence rates and review the formal procedures for managing sickness absence accordingly.
- 59.3 The Trade Unions raised concerns about levels of stress due to high workload. They asked that managers develop plans of action to address this that referenced the HSE Stress Management Standards, and that management revisited Workload Management Systems and their application as a matter of urgency.
- 59.4 The Chief People Officer reported that the results of the My UCL Experience staff survey would be available at the end of April and would provide a useful insight into this issue. It was agreed that the Vice-Provost (Faculties) would be asked to chair a Workload Management Systems working group and that training would be provided for Heads of Department in staff workload management, through the Academic Leadership Group.
- 59.5 The Trade Unions asked for a long-awaited report-back on the rest and eating facilities survey, and for action to be taken on the lack of such facilities and also of water fountains across the UCL estate. The Chair, Fire Safety Sub-Committee responded that the space required for use by staff (for childcare and prayer, as well as rest and eating facilities) was under review due to the change in the population of staff on campus with the advent of hybrid working, and to see if it was fit for purpose.

31 March 2022

- 59.6 The Trade Unions asked that the ISD Termly Increment Planning Event to be held in late April have in-person attendance made optional, with online access. A ventilation audit of the venue before the event and the provision of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors were also requested.
- 59.7 The Convenor reported that remote access was now available although in-person attendance was preferred. The Chair, Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee agreed to try to arrange for a ventilation audit and the provision of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors.
- 59.8 The Trade Unions requested reassurance that the repeated instances of Estates Division maintenance staff switching off critical safety systems in CL3 laboratories without warning were being investigated with urgency. The Chair, Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee agreed to undertake an investigation of the several incidents affecting the department of one of the Trade Union representatives, to try to identify the underlying cause and find a solution.
- 59.9 A Trade Union representative requested a copy of the UCL response to the enforcement letter issued by the HSE after their inspection of CL3 facilities last year. The Head of Safety Governance and Risk replied that this had already been issued and would resend it.
- 60 Update on HSE enforcement actions/action plan (Paper 6-34)**
- 60.5 Ms Rachel Fairfax briefly presented a paper providing a status update on the HSE enforcement actions and the response action plan.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **61 Any other business**

- 61.1 The Convenor thanked the departing Chief People Officer and Head of Safety Governance and Risk for all their contributions to the work of the Committee.

The meeting finished at 1.00pm

Jon Blackman

April 2022