

University Health & Safety Arrangements: Chapter 14



School and local health & safety committees

Key word(s):	Health & Safety Committees, trade union and staff representation; membership and agendas.
Target audience:	Senior managers; chairs of health & safety committees; TU safety representatives, staff representatives; health & safety committee members.

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Introduction

1. The University's health and safety policy statement requires Heads of Schools (and those with similar responsibilities such as directors in PSS or of research institutes) to set up local Health and Safety Committees, or in exceptional circumstances, other means of carrying out the same functions. The term "local" in this document encompasses school, institute and in some cases, building health & safety committees.
2. The terms of reference, membership and frequency of meetings of these committees should be commensurate with the magnitude of the risk and complexity of the school or unit to which it refers, and should be clearly documented.

Chair and membership

3. Chairing a or local health & safety committee is a very effective way of demonstrating commitment and leadership in this area of work, and showing how managers deal with issues as they arise and as staff raise concerns. Some senior managers prefer to attend as an active member rather than chair the meeting.
4. A typical local health & safety committee will meet 2-4 times a year, unless circumstances require more frequent meeting. The committee officers should be drawn from all groups of staff, including those working in office or other lower risk environments.
5. Membership of the committee should include representation from all sections or divisions within the school or directorate, and all areas of technical expertise. In some cases, staff working in lower risk areas may be happy for others to pass on any concerns they have, but relatively low risk areas should not be overlooked. In some cases, committee chairs will wish to invite attendance or receive reports from other interested parties; for example, there may be common interests between Estates-led Building User Groups (BUGS, or focus groups).
6. Membership should always include trade union safety representatives, in accordance with the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977. If there are no recognised trade union members or representatives, sections should be asked to appoint someone to attend and feedback to others ("staff representatives").
7. University Safety Co-ordinators from Safety Services should be invited to attend, and are able to advise the committee but are not members.

Committee business

8. The committee should endeavour to focus on matters of policy and practice, not specific complaints. The latter should be dealt with as a matter of routine, and only reported to the committee if there are fundamental faults with the internal complaints procedures, or patterns of repeated or persistent complaints about the same issue.
9. A typical agenda might include:
 - a) reports from the school or local safety advisor, other specialist advisors (as applicable, radiation protection supervisors, school laser safety advisors, school bio/GM safety advisors, etc)
 - b) summary of accident or incident statistics, and outcomes of their investigations
 - c) any awareness campaign or targeted information about specific topics of interest
 - d) health and safety training needs, and progress towards training provision and competency of key personnel, evaluation of effectiveness of training
 - e) discussion of any correspondence from Safety Services about new legislation, new university policies or guidance, etc.
 - f) matters raised by members and safety representatives

- g) reports from internal inspection programme and risk assessment checks, and recommendations/action plans
 - h) reports of control measure checks, e.g. examinations of pressure systems, lifting equipment, local exhaust equipment, personal protective equipment, portable appliance and electrical safety checks, DSE user assessments, etc
 - i) reports from any visits from other agencies (HSE, insurers, etc.)
 - j) reports and recommendations from Safety Services audits (HASMAPP) or other audits
 - k) reports and recommendations arising from fire risk assessments
 - l) action plans (annual objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs), inspection programmes, etc.)
 - m) annual reviews of local policy statement, health & safety entries on risk register, health & safety questions on compliance returns
 - n) annual monitoring reports – items to be covered in future reports, drafts for comment, consideration of feedback from USCs and OHSTAG
 - o) reports from building user groups, or other relevant committee
 - p) proposed installation of any new equipment/introduction of new hazard or change that might have implications for health & safety
10. The majority of matters will be dealt with satisfactorily within the Committee. However, if the Committee agrees that a particular issue is of relevance to other schools within the faculty, that issue should be referred to the Dean, by the HOS.
11. If the committee agrees that a particular issue is of relevance across the whole University, that issue should be referred to the Occupational Health, Safety and Training Advisory Group (OHSTAG), through the University Safety co-ordinator or the Chair of OHSTAG, or from the Head of School to the Head of Safety.
12. Further advice and assistance is available from Safety Services and the University Safety Co-ordinators.

Document control box	
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