

Memo

To Safety Co-ordinators (for onward transmission to Heads of School & School Safety Advisors)

From Dr Melanie Taylor, University Safety Advisor

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Distribution Dr S A Robson

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Eye protection in laboratories

Historically, there has been a different approach to the provision of eye protection for students working in laboratory areas. At VUM, all departments paid for this, and at UMIST, in an anomalous arrangement, protective spectacles were provided through Occupational Health (other protective equipment was provided by departments).

For clarification, please ensure your school safety advisors are made aware of the current arrangements throughout the University:

- for staff and students, the school is responsible for providing personal protective equipment and ensuring it is worn, where specified in risk assessments or codes of practice. In terms of eye protection, I would expect general purpose protective glasses to be necessary in all laboratories where there is a risk of substances splashing into the eye. Where there are risks of penetrating injuries or other eye hazards, specialist eye protection will be necessary.
- if staff or students already wear spectacles to correct sight, a judgement will need to be made about whether over-glasses or visors are practicable or likely to be worn, or whether prescription safety spectacles should be provided. Over glasses may compromise clarity of vision and be uncomfortable when worn with ordinary prescription glasses for long periods of time.
- There is no legal obligation to pay for eye tests in these circumstances, as there is for work with display screen equipment. If prescription safety spectacles are appropriate, the individual should provide a recent prescription from an opticians.

Further advice about eye protection can be obtained from the University Safety Co-ordinators, and from Occupational Health. For ex-UMIST schools, details of suppliers of general purpose eye protection can be obtained from Jackie Wilkinson, Occupational Health, The Mill (extension 64006).

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