

Workplace Health and Safety Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2024

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

Ex Officio Members:

Dr Joss Ivory (Chief Operating Officer, **Chair**)
Martyn Godwin (Chair, Radiation Safety Group/Laser Safety Group)
Suzy Shelton (HR representative)
Monica Kanwar (Director of Health and Safety)
Gary Malcolm (Occupational Health Advisor)
Paul Mullins (University Fire Safety Officer)
David Nelson (University Biological Safety Officer)
Professor Duncan Petrie (Dean of Faculty of Arts and Humanities)

Student Union Representatives:

Geoff Ward (YSU H&S Development Coordinator)

Faculty Representatives:

Andy Firth (Technical Operations Manager, Sciences)
Jamie Holiday (Director of Faculty Operations, Social Sciences)

Trade Union Representatives:

Dr Christopher Crispin-Bailey (UCU)
Chris Fielding (UNISON)L
Michael Walker (UNITE)

Other Members

Tom Banham (Interim Academic Registrar, SAAS representative)
Richard Hagan (Archaeology, Technical staff representative)

In attendance:

Dev Agarwal (Head of Safety Operations/Deputy Director of H&S)
Dr Philip Evans (**Secretary**)
Kris Fieldhouse (Campus Safety representative)
Ben Flowerdew (IPC, Subject Lead for Science/Engineering)
Richard Walker (Assistant Director/Strategic Programmes, DTEF)
Roger Ward (Director of Estates and Capital Development)
Lisa Woods (Director of Accommodation and Commercial Services)

Apologies for absence:

Nigel Alcock, Chief Financial & Operating Officer
Professor Andy Dougill (Dean of Faculty of Sciences)
Professor Karen Rowlingson (Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences)
Ros Roberts (Interim Director of Faculty Operations, A&H)

SECTION 1: Standing Items

Declarations of Interest

24-25/1 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. None were declared.

Terms of Reference/Constituency (WHSC.24-25/1)

24-25/2 As it was the first meeting of the new academic year the Committee **considered** its Terms of Reference (ToR) and Constituency.

24-25/3 The Chair and Secretary **reported** that:

1. the ToR/Constituency had been reviewed and updated since the last meeting to bring them into alignment with the standard template for University committees and to reflect changes in job titles and roles following organisational restructuring;
2. the Chair and Director of H&S would be undertaking a further review of the Committee's constituency and current sub-groups ahead of the new Chief Financial & Operating Officer (CFOO) assuming the Chair from January 2025; the Committee would be consulted on any proposed changes before they were submitted to the University Executive Board (UEB) for approval in December 2024.

Minutes of Last Meeting (WHSC.24-25/2)

24-25/4 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 were **approved**.

Action Schedule (WHSC.24-25/3)

24-25/5 The Committee **considered** its action-tracking schedule.

24-25/6 The Secretary **reported** that:

1. actions completed since the last meeting were indicated by strikethrough lines and would be removed from the schedule once reported to the Committee at this meeting;
2. the update text in the final Progress column had been provided by the relevant action-owners.

24-25/7 In respect of the ongoing actions, the Chair and the Committee **observed** that:

1. Action 2: the DTEF Working Group considering H&S responsibility for non-Faculty multi-use buildings would liaise with the IPC representative on any perceived gaps and report back to the next meeting;
2. Action 3: widescale communication to staff and students was being planned to promote the *Safezone* app which now had more than 10,000 registered users;
3. Action 4: further discussions were required in a University-wide group to agree on appropriate policy and guidance for the charging by staff and students on campus of different sorts of e-vehicles (cars, bikes and scooters) in the context of the University's sustainability agenda; as a complex sector-wide issue examples of best practice might be available from other HEIs, noting that some had already decided on outright bans for student-owned e-scooters; guidance should also be sought from the University's insurers as well as review of the information (if any) currently being provided to students on this matter; as the matter had been referred to the Committee some time ago and a clear solution was now required, the Director of H&S was asked to work with relevant colleagues in DTEF and Campus Safety to develop an appropriate policy recommendation [**ACTION: Director of H&S in collaboration with DTEF and Campus Safety**];
4. Action 7: as fire drills were actioned through campus Zone Managers, the Fire Safety Officer would update the Committee at its next meeting on their organisation and scheduling following his review of the previous arrangements;
5. Actions 9 and 10: as the new PEEP process and procedure were functioning effectively, these could be marked as complete, noting that the new Fire Safety Officer would also be reviewing the more operational aspects;
6. Actions 15 and 16: these were covered by reports to this meeting and so would be marked as complete.

Draft Annual Schedule 2024-25 (WHSC.24-25/4)

24-25/8 The Committee **noted** its draft annual schedule of business for 2024-25.

24-25/9 The Secretary **reported** that:

1. the schedule identified the standing items at each meeting and remained a 'work in progress' which would evolve with the Committee's own ongoing development as a UEB sub-group and consultative forum;
2. any significant changes to the Committee's ToR or sub-groups (M24-25/3 above refers) might need to be captured by the addition of new reports/items of business in the schedule.

SECTION 2: Strategic Development, Planning and Performance Development

Director's Overview Report (WHSC.24-25/5)

24-25/10 The Committee **considered** a general update from the Director of Health and Safety covering a wide range of H&S matters.

- 24-25/11 The Director **reported** that:
1. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**;
 2. Faculties could access the data broken down by Department, which would assist the Deans in driving up completion rates;
 3. work was ongoing with HR to improve access to additional training data in non-mandated areas but required as part of specific roles;
 4. effective partnership working with the Faculty of Science had facilitated successful delivery of the IOSH Managing Safely and Ladder Safety course, which also had been opened up to other relevant University colleagues and linked to the Technician Commitment action-plan;
 5. accident data for the period (Q1 to date) was relatively low but was likely to increase with the start of the new academic year; in 2023-24 there had been 120 staff accidents reported and 126 near misses;
 6. a successful Water Safety event had been held for the second year running.
- 24-25/12 The Chair, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities and the Committee **observed** that:
1. driving up the completion rates for all mandated University training courses was a current institutional priority, noting that total Faculty percentage rates could conceal a wide variance across individual Departments;
 2. at the forthcoming Arts & Humanities Executive Board the Heads of Departments would be encouraged to examine the data for their respective Departments to identify areas of low completion;
 3. one method to improve engagement in training would be to stress the requirement on individuals to look after their own health and safety but also that of other colleagues, with an emphasis on this being an aspect of community and collegiality; targeted follow-up could also be undertaken by DSAs, with escalation to line managers where necessary;
 4. development of template wording for emails to HoDs and an associated simple toolkit/process for increasing training participation rates was currently in train as a University-wide initiative; consideration was also being given to possible sanction measures for non-completion, noting that failure to comply with reasonable management instruction could become a disciplinary offence **[ACTION: Chief Operating Officer/People & Organisational Development]**;
 5. the next Water Safety event might usefully be held on Campus East **[ACTION: WHSO]**;
 6. UKHSA had provided a toolkit for universities in respect of Mpox and the University would continue to liaise as necessary with the City of York's Director of Public Health on this matter.
- Draft Annual Health and Safety Report 2023/24 (WHSC.24-25/6 and WHSC.24-25-II/1)**
- 24-25/13 The Committee **considered** the draft Annual H&S Report 2023/24, noting that it would subsequently be submitted to UEB, Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) and ultimately University Council (Council).
- 24-25/14 The Director and the Chair **reported** that:
1. the report included an overarching assurance statement for Council based on 2023/24 H&S data and also a table summarising current safeguards in the 'three lines of defence' format (a framework for managing risk and control in an organisation);
 2. a new addition to the report were the appended reports from the H&S Business Partners on issues and activity in each Faculty;
 3. the newly established WHSO team had only been together for six months but continued to make progress in driving H&S development, as set out in detail in the report;
 4. the report provided annual data on accidents/incidents and RIDDOR reportable events (including main causes and injuries), both of which showed a downward trend compared to the previous year; data was also provided on the online and F2F training delivered over the course of the year;
 5. as well as reporting against the 2023/24 key performance objectives, the report included a forward look and the objectives for 2024/25;
 6. the key drivers and pillars for building a continual cycle of safety improvement were set out in the report along with the timeline for developing a strategic University-wide approach to H&S management;
 7. the Director would be leaving the University at the end of November 2024 but her Deputy would continue to drive the programme of continuous improvement and development.
- 24-25/15 The Committee **observed** that:
1. in response to written comments from the UCU representative on accident/incident data-sharing protocols with the campus trade unions (TUs), which had been submitted to the Chair and H&S Director shortly before the meeting, the WHSO should provide a response to UCU to clarify the current

protocols and any associated legislative requirements or GDPR considerations [**ACTION: Deputy Director of H&S**];

2. it endorsed the Annual H&S Report 2023/24 for onwards submission to UEB.

Faculty/DTEF Health and Safety Committees (WHSC.24-25/7)

24-25/16 The Committee **considered** IDA logs from meetings of the DTEF and Faculty H&S Committees.

24-25/17 It was **noted** that:

1. as set out in the Annual Report, common current themes across Faculties included accident reporting, training, travel and PEEPs;
2. the Social Sciences Committee had undertaken some work around visiting work experience pupils which would be shared with the other Faculties;
3. the BPs and DSAs would continue to support and promote training in Departments.

Staff Health and Wellbeing (WHSC.24-25/8)

24-25/18 The Committee **considered** a report on staff health and wellbeing from the HR representative and the Occupational Health Adviser.

24-25/19 It was **reported** that:

1. work had commenced in HR to develop a set of appropriate KPIs on staff health and wellbeing for monitoring by the Committee;
2. the University was currently considering its position as regards *Health Assured* (external provider of the Employee Assistance Programme) following suspension of its counselling service accreditation by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy;
3. there had been no significant change in the level or nature of occupational health (OH) referrals since the report to the last meeting, with the current wait-time reduced from 5 to 3 weeks; the relatively high number of ill-health retirement applications was notable;
4. it had been decided to cease OH self-referrals as in some cases the process had been mis-used and manager-led referral was deemed to be a more appropriate route for accessing OH support;
5. while most other health surveillance programmes were working well, attendance at spirometry clinics was regularly poor despite the adoption of a more risk-based approach to spirometry invitations [**ACTION: Faculty H&S Committees to promote attendance in collaboration with Occupational Health Adviser**].

24-25/20 The Committee **observed** that the feedback currently being gathered from UCU members in respect of the cessation of OH self-referral, which had been reported to the TUs in August 2024, should be shared with HR for consideration [**ACTION: UCU rep/HR**].

Campus East Student Accommodation (WHSC.24-25/9)

24-25/21 The Committee **received for information** a report previously submitted to ARC on potential defects and build quality issues in the external wall systems at three residential Colleges on Campus East.

24-25/22 The Director of Estates **reported** that:

1. DTEF was continuing to investigate the issues in collaboration with the original building contractors who had also appointed specialist fire safety consultants; discussions were also ongoing with funders, insurers and the NYFRS, with the latter having confirmed they were happy for the University to work through further investigations and remediation plans;
2. a draft plan of remedial works had been drawn up which was likely to take up to a year to complete;
3. the University's Fire Safety team was actively involved in the matter and a 24/7 'waking watch' established for the perimeter of the buildings;
4. a Silver Incident Management Team had initially been convened to manage the investigation process and initial response, including potential impact on student residents, but this group had now been stood down.

Biological Agents Safety Committee (WHSC.24-25/10)

24-25/23 The Committee **received for information** the minutes of the meeting of the Biological Agents Safety Committee held on 5 July 2024.

24-25/24 The Committee **observed** that:

1. rather than full minutes from sub-committees it would be more useful going forward to receive a one-page executive summary of any significant matters they wished to bring to the Committee's attention; this would also be picked up in the recommendations for amended governance arrangements around the Committee's sub-committees which were currently being developed by the Chair for consideration by UEB [**ACTION: Chief Operating Officer**];
2. the sub-committee should also submit its minutes to the Science Faculty Health and Safety Committee and the executive summary [**ACTION: University Biological Safety Officer**].

Valediction

24-25/25 Noting that this was the last meeting for the Chief Operating Officer (Dr Joss Ivory) and the Director of Health and Safety (Monica Kanwar), the Committee thanked both colleagues for their leadership and commitment to the health and safety agenda during their time in office.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24-25/26 The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Tuesday 18 February 2025 (14:00-16:00, via Zoom),